

**Minutes from the
Wisconsin Young Forest Partnership
Steering Committee Meeting
December 12, 2014
10am-noon CST
Venue: Rhinelander WDNR Conf Rm 1 / Conference call**

Members Present: Dan Eklund, Matthew St. Piere, Gary Zimmer, Shawn Hagen, Curt Rollman, Tom Kraft, Chris Borden, Michael Stinebrink, Amber Roth, Jeremy Holtz, Yoyi Steele, Pat Ruble, Andrew Rothman, Gary VanVreede, Eric Holm, Scott Walters, Jeff Larkin

A. Agenda

- Andrew wants to add goals and adjectives to the conservation deliver 12:45 PM portion
- Agenda approved otherwise

B. Approval of Minutes

- Gary motioned to approve the minutes
- Seconded Shawn
- Consensus minutes approved
- Amber will put them on griffin groups

C. Elections

- Jeremy explained the executive and steering committee terms
- Dan is the incumbent Vice Chair of the Steering committee
- Dan is the only nomination for the second year; discussion from Gary to increase the term of this position to two years, but would require a change to the tenants. Not further discussion
- Pat motion to close nominations; Gary seconds. No concerns, consensus is reached and Dan Eklund is re-elected.
- Second Vice Chair of the Steering committee
- Amber is the only nomination for the second year. Nominations closed. Dan motion to elect, Gary seconds. Amber re-elected, consensus is reached.

D. MOU update (Amber)

- No new information on the MOU from Kurt according to Amber. Amber had contact with WBCI steering committee member and no further questions came from said contact. Yoyi will follow up on WBCI's end and will add the MOU to the agenda for the WBCI steering committee meeting. Amber asked for Yoyi to reaffirm the WBCI steering committee reps. Amber has had no contact from WOWA on the MOU.

E. Executive Committee Issues (Jeremy)

- Handling new requests for resources (details of the MOU and the partnership) of the partnership. Duluth and Indianapolis have requested the MOU and details of the

membership. Jeremy sent out an email about partnership resources and asked requests to go to the steering committee. The executive committee is not the final say on resource requests. Burden should not fall on Callie. Dan asks the room what they feel about sharing resources? Jeff Larkin stated sharing is important. Amber stated all resources are public or soon to be anyways so no problem with sharing resources. Andrew suggests to informing the partnership on who is requesting these resources. Jeremy stated who he has shared information with so far : Keith Warneke (hunter recruitment), Lisa Kardash (prairie chicken group startup). Amber's and Dan's requests: Kirtland's warbler group (expressed interest in becoming part of the partnership, but very early in the process). Gary hopes these requests create more habitat, "not a bad thing to work ourselves out of business."

- Scott Walter is the new steering committee rep. Adrian Weydeven no longer with the committee, but no plan to refill the position so Scott is in the position for the future. Wildlife Rep is Scott Walter. Scott can take discussions to the policy level.
- Discussion moved to woodcock. American Woodcock no longer slated to be a species of greatest conversation need. Gary expressed concern that the population is still declining.
- Forestry Rep. Need a replacement. Jeremy asked Scott to request for a new forestry rep.
- NRCS rep. Will be a technical rep, but not a voting member, due to NRCS policy. Greg Redman retired so need to fill. Cris will be the new NRCS rep. Start date for the new forester will be April 6th and will attend a few steering committee meetings to get familiar.
- No limit to how many attend a steering committee meeting from an organization. Primary and alternate reps asked for "simplicity" sake, but no limit.
- Gary Zimmer will be rep until May 31st. RGS looking to hire a replacement(expect to become the new rep) in two weeks. Replacement will be less supervisory and more focus in Minnesota than previous. Gary will still be around as a sounding board.
- Andrew ABC new rep. ABC has hired Craig Thomas (start next month) as a great lakes regional coordinator. Will oversee staff in the great lakes and become the main rep. Andrew will become the second rep. Craig will become the direct supervisor to Callie.

F. Outreach Subcommittee (Amber)

- Amber showed the youngforest.org/wi website. Updates : news tab, filled with RCPP and NFWF news releases. Gary stated RFS is doing great work on woodcock migration (telemetry). May be worth linking on the YFI website. Amber requested any other news stories to be highlighted on the website. Chris suggested an upcoming article in the WDNR magazine from an engaged landowner. Jeremy stated things upcoming on the WDNR side that will be newsworthy. Logos in a rotating banner on the bottom of the main YFI website. Gary asked if it's possible to put Wisconsin logos on the Wisconsin page.

- Logo options. Amber has received great feedback on the current logo, stands out well. 4 logos up for discussion. Outreach committee liked the gray background logo the best. This logo needs a few tweaks such as perch for GWWA and details on the AMWO bird. Graphic designer suggested fewer details. Amber opened logo discussion to the committee. Jeremy liked the black and white with the leaf tip orientated to the right. The group eliminated the old logo and Jeremy's logo. If the gray logo could have the requested changes then that would be the chosen logo. Then have two versions of the logo, one with the acronym and one with WFYI spelled out.
- Scott stated the video is done. RGS a great help on the project. Video done in house by the office of communications staff. Final project very well done; will be a great outreach tool. Video will be on youtube as three five minute blocks. Yoyi thought the video looked really good. The video brought initial viewers to tears! Gary requested that the RGS can use it on the website, which will be a simple link embed. The video is open for use by all in the partnership. Chris suggested having better keywords for the youtube search. Jeremy asked Scott to get new keywords implemented.
- Next project for the committee is the brochure

G. Finance Subcommittee (Dan)

- Applied for WI SFI grant and obtained \$10 k. WMI is the grant holder. This grant is going towards outreach costs.
- \$10 k from the RGS drummer fund. To help with various tasks associated with operations and the new WDNR LTE position.
- NFWF and ABC partnership. 399,000 available for MN and WI. To support coordinator and forester in Wisconsin. \$25 k for implementation, \$30 k for plans, \$3600 for communication and outreach.
- RCPP (ABC and NRCS). 4 million for WI MN and MI for 3 years. Deliverables 2900 acres in Wisconsin. Provides funding for a forester and LTE to assist with the "militia". Andrew is figuring out how to parcel out "technical assistance" dollars. The total number of acres under the FA will be 8000 acres distributed over the 3 states. 3000 WI 3500 MN 1500 MI. These numbers can be fluid as going forward. Tom intends to have a sign up yet this year after the negotiations are done. If landowners did not get funded in the first round they are eligible for RCPP and should be on a similar timeframe for work. This RCPP plan is unique to the NRCS as the terms were negotiated and all "technical" money goes to current salaries and not for new positions. Technical assistance money is going to the new two ABC positions.
- Other funding, dollars for partnership operations (USFS) which could go to new staff costs.
- Webless Grant (USFWS) with Michigan Tech. Need for monitoring the progress of all the habitat work. Looks good to get money for monitoring through this webless grant. Monitoring two piece : One by student (hard data, evaluating BMP) and the other by the citizen landowners (soft data, citizen science). \$121,000 over three years, if they fund the whole request.

- Dan will create an excel to track the budget once some of these upcoming grants/funding sources gets finalized. To keep all the partners on the same page.
- Amber requested having a spreadsheet for all the deliverables as well. Important to keep track of all “in-kind” matches as well.

H. Personnel Subcommittee (Jeremy)

- Jeremy impromptu chair until first personnel subcommittee meeting, which has not happened yet. As staff is added this committee will become more active; which is coming quick. Be good to be on same page for personnel for deliverables and grant requirements. Good to give clear directions for personnel. Andrew stated that it is nice to have personnel with associated deliverables. Need to adapt with the “militia” as this grows as they do not have associated deliverables. Committee meeting – goals for partnership and goals for the staff. Tom wants to have a discussion to get everyone on the same page, i.e. if the NRCS forester gives recommendations that may violate a WDNR MFL plan. Jeremy states that there are fallbacks on that situation. There is a good open communication with WDNR foresters and amendments can be made to plans. New employees should have same base background on other projects (MFL, NRCS plans, etc.), unified training may be the answer.
- **Where to place this?**

I. Update on conservation delivery

- MFL landowners shied away from at first as they were on the “hook”. NRCS (Michael) liked dealing with MFL as they were good candidates for NRCS programs. The end goal of all this is to get private landowners doing sound management on their lands, no matter MFL or not. Tom wants to be sure NRCS knows how to move forward on some of these site visits, when to contact a forester and when not? When to take the lead?
- Dan stated that its great to get out on the landscape, but they are postage stamps, don’t forget to focus on creating “larger” blocks. Andrew agreed and stated it may be more beneficial to target where the initial habitat work is done, I.E. GWWA areas. Then possibly branch out at a landscape level.
- Kurt email – worried about EQIP bottlenecks? Is it going forward as planned? Michael stated that the EQIP deadline was so soon after Callie started that made it difficult (Oct 3rd). Cris stated that there was an initial learning curve with NRCS staff but it went well. Cris expressed concern on 2900 acres, large volume. Need to develop a system once requests outweigh the funding available, to rank sites that are better than others (ranking system). Dan stated that the acreage will grow quickly as the partnership expands into aspen work and may equate to more acreage and less sites. The partnership will continue to grow on more than just mailings, but also word of mouth. Jeremy trying to think of new ideas to get aspen involved. Idea to focus on priority blocks to focus outreach in these areas, i.e. large aspen areas on air photos etc.
- NRCS looking to change their plan on making payment. Maybe not do on acreage payment. Talk about contractors to GPS as they do work to get exact acreage.; maybe incentivize that from a contractors perspective. NRCS does pay farmers to be a

“demonstration” farm to show others the work done by NRCS, Tom suggested the partnership use NRCS model. Jeremy thinks there is great potential for this as many landowners have expressed interest in showing off the work.

- New contractors are signing up to do the work as the partnership grows. Training of CFPs has gone well and there are now CFPs specifically trained in the partnership plan.
- Dan expressed interest in understanding the NRCS better; who is responsible for each step in the process?
- RGS worked on 143 acres (but not all WYFP or NRCS) of habitat work.
- How to assess goals and objectives? Jeremy asked the committee for ideas on how to assess goals and objectives. Dan suggested a working day meeting after RCPP rolls out. Andrew stated that the goals he has laid out are the deliverables associated with Callie’s position and NRCS. Identify overarching goals on habitat acreages for species, IE GWWA. 6500 acres per year to reach the GWWA habitat goal for Wisconsin, how to assess this? Is it even reachable? Gary stated that the acreage goals do add up when add the county work and other public lands projects. Jeremy agreed that the public lands can really add to the acreage total and MFL lands as well, WDNR forestry needs to be in the conversation of goals as they can help add up acreage. Jeremy stated that the created goals were attainable based on current staffing but should be changed as the partnership grows. Gary states it may make sense to focus on non MFL lands moving forward as they may be ripe with aspen as they have not yet been managed (lands not enrolled or not qualified). Reiterated the idea to focus on a focal areas, can get a lot of work done if stay in a small community, less need for equipment hauling etc. Larger workloads in a small area is more appealing to contractors as well.
- NRCS ranking questions with YFI. Andrew suggested to add an additional point to a landowner that is in a focal area. Add ranks associated with GWWA bmps? Tom would give the partner (ABC) the freedom to setup the points for ranking, identify priority counties, landowner requirements. Lots of flexibility in the ranking system from Wisconsin. Michael stated that ranking may not be super necessary in the first year of RCPP as enrollment may not outweigh the funding available. Dan stated that it is difficult to create a blanket ranking system as aspen varies across the three state area and even within Wisconsin, maybe keeping the ranking system broad to avoid this issue. Andrew stated that the ranking/BMPs can be for generalities but then its up to the forester to change based on the site and fine tune based on site characteristics. ABC is having a meeting on Monday to discuss rankings. ABC will either provide a draft of the rankings to the partnership and accept comments OR have the partnership give comments and ABC brings the comments to the meeting with NRCS. Scott stated that he would like to see a separate ranking system for each state.
- Top bullet continued. Summary : How general or fine should the new ranking system be? Dan keeps expressing interest in habitat suitability models do not apply uniformly across the 3 states. Basically expressing dangers of being too focused on goals that may not apply universally.

- Eric states there are some places in MFL lands that have productive aspen but the MFL writer deemed it too small acreage to be productive. Eric thinks that the county foresters can give us a list on these properties. Eric requested what records the partnership needs from the counties? Make it much simpler as he contacts counties through the year. How often? Quarterly? Bi-yearly?
- Andrew reiterates that RCPP is a multi-state program; Wisconsin is one part of a bigger piece. Asked for a list of public lands eligible for ESH work and then focus on the private lands near the public lands.
- Jeremy asked for a consensus from the group to create goals for a future conference call. Proposal for a conference call on a future date. Amber will start a document on griffin groups and committee members can add their ideas in regards to goals and objectives. If technical issues persist with griffin groups Andrew can upload for affected individuals.
- The three state areas will have RCPP and EQIP opportunities. Landowners can qualify for multiple funding pools. There is more than RCPP is out there, many different programs. Landowners need to act quickly to be sure to qualify for these different opportunities.

J. LSRP overlap with WAYFP (Amber)

- Tom suggests it would be really good to get the overview from the other group. Cooperation will be good and easy to do. LSRP has a large amount of funds available. Although similar, it is difficult to match up the deadlines of LSRP and WAYFP.

K. Monitoring focal species (Jeff/Amber)

- GWWA and AMWO, monitoring funds for GWWA through NFWF and blank. Webless grant should be coming through for monitoring AMWO. Jeff Larkin stated no monitoring will be done in Wisconsin this year. Jeff Larkin has a “mini” partnership in Maryland and Penn. It has been successful and they are turning to monitoring public and private lands (primary emphasis). Monitoring will be starting in MN this year. Phase 2 will be range wide monitoring which will start to include more public lands. GWWA is the focus of this monitoring but AMWO will be paired with these monitoring sites. Also, all species are monitored on these sites as well. AMWO is more difficult to monitor as the window is so small. Larkin’s graduate student will become a PhD candidate at Cornell Bird Lab and will be involved with the AMWO monitoring going forward. Monitoring should begin in MI and WI next year, at the very least private lands will be monitored, although much is left to be determined. It is important to receive .shp files from the landowners (prop boundaries and habitat areas). Jeff has staff available to help with the .shp files. Jeff stated that involvement with landowners to allow monitoring is largely successful (only 3 refused monitoring) and NRCS in the states have been very helpful.
- NRCS issues for future Wisconsin monitoring. Chris and Michael both feel monitoring on private lands is very doable, i.e. signing up agreements, landowner permission, etc. The only initial roadblock was timing and should be alleviated in the future. May work

to ask the landowner for monitoring permission on initial sign up. NRCS staff is not needed to discuss monitoring, anyone can start the process. Michael and Chris do not foresee any issues coming from NRCS on monitoring. Beneficial to provide CPWs with a list as to what they need to mention to a landowner in regards to young forest work, i.e. monitoring. Michael mentioned there are parallels to other NRCS programs where monitoring is worked into the agreement and even have monetary incentives associated with allowing monitoring. Jeff or Andrew stated that a new database will be created to help navigate monitoring results.

- **Off topic** Scott asked Michael and Chris about NHC issues in NRCS programs. Chris expressed hits he has encountered on wood turtles which may not have been an issue since it was alder shearing in winter. Chris asked for potentially some flexibility on “hits”.
- Jeremy asked if a subcommittee is necessary for monitoring. Scott suggested relying on the “SEEP”? grant. Amber and Jeff will coordinate on future monitoring plans. No subcommittee was created.

L. Next Meetings (Jeremy)

- Full partnership meeting in the summer with associated site visits will be scheduled in July. Gary suggested going to sites that have had active management over 8-10 years.
- Steering committee meeting in June via conference call, IF needed going forward. Main focus on the meeting would be to plan the full partnership meeting in July.

Adjourn

- Motion to adjourn Gary. Amber seconded. Motion passed.