

**Minutes from the
Wisconsin Young Forest Partnership
Steering Committee Meeting
July 1, 2015
10am-3pm CST
Venue: Rhinelander WDNR Conf Rm 1 / Conference call**

Members Present: Amber Roth, Yoyi Steele, Dale Zaug, Eric Holm, Chris Borden, Craig Thompson, Scott Walter, Brian Spencer, Kurt Waterstradt, Dan Eklund, Jeremy Holtz, Callie Bertsch, Matt St. Pierre, Curt Rollman

- A. Additions to agenda—Jeremy
 - Call for additions to agenda.
 - None Heard

- B. Approve minutes from last SC meeting—Jeremy
 - Minutes approved

- C. Steering Committee Additions: Craig Thompson (ABC), Dale Zaug (WWOA), Dan Dessecker (RGS), Brian Spencer (WDNR Forestry)
 - Introductions of new additions:
 - Dale Zaug Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association.
 - Discussion turned to WWOA signing the MOU. Jeremy Holtz stated they want to wait due to financial reasons. It was then stated the MOU does not have to have financial attachment. Jeremy Holtz will continue contact.
 - Chris Borden highlighted a good relationship with WWOA. Future meeting planned for September 20th where YFI can be discussed.
 - Craig Thompson new ABC rep. Great Lakes Regional Director for ABC
 - Dan Dessecker (not present) but will be filled by Scott Walter by the time of next meeting.
 - Brian Spencer temporary WDNR forestry rep.
 - Future Presentations about YFI
 - **Jeremy Holtz has an upcoming talk with Madison DNR. Also presenting at a NRB board meeting on September 22nd.**
 - Craig Thompson will be meeting with Madison DNR in September on behalf of ABC in regards to YFI.

Kurt asked about WWOA signing MOU. Jeremy has contacted the president but they wanted to wait. Holding back due to financial reasons. Jeremy states that there does not need to be finances attached to signing the MOU. The main benefit would be to use their normal activities as match for the partnership.

Chris highlighted a good relationship with WWOA and the future for YFI expansion with them; future meeting – September 20th with WWOA where young forest can be tied in to the meeting. YFI is not on the agenda, but can be brought up. **CRAIG ASKED THIS TO BE IN THE MINUTES.**

Jeremy will follow up with contact with WWOA.

Jeremy has a talk with Madison DNR. Request started with wood turtle NHI but now is a larger talk.

Jeremy has a talk in September 22nd with a NRB board meeting to talk about YFI.

Craig Thompson – September will be meeting with WDNR in Madison on behalf of ABC about YFI.

D. Finance Subcommittee—Dan Eklund

- Summary of grants
- WMI \$10,000 grant (SFI grant).
 - Mailings, DVDs and associated hand-outs.
 - Brochure soon to be printed for the packet.
 - Remaining balance may be devoted to the website.
- ABC NFWF Grant - \$399,000
 - \$399,000
 - Forestry ABC position
 - Coordinator position
 - \$25,000 for implementation for public and private lands
 - \$30,00 for CPWs
 - 17 CPW appeared at training to create plans for private landowners
 - Helps give landowners plans
 - CPWs have to become a contractor to ABC in order to receive this grant money to get paid.
 - Dan Eklund un-sure how public land can enter the process for this grant money.
 - Craig Thompson stated he will follow up on that
 - Request aired to distribute a list of trained CPWs
 - CPWs have to enter a RFP process in order to fulfill NFWF grant stipulations in order to receive grant dollars.
- NRCS RCPP
 - Most of the partnership has yet to see RCPP details (Dan Eklund included).
 - Leverage into RCPP from all partners.
 - 3 state award (MI,MN,WI)
 - \$5 million award
 - \$1 million for NRCS for technical assistance dollars.
 - RCPP 4 year agreement
 - Can renegotiate in year 3
 - \$112,000 available for Wisconsin this year
 - Scott Walter stated Farm Bill biologists coming from WDNR in 2017.
 - Marinette? Medford? Ladysmith?
 - NRCS dollars to help?

- Funded by stamp funds
 - YFI and Lake Superior
 - Funding for positions : 50% NRCS, 40% WDNR, PF 10%.
 - Craig Thompson expressed concern about using RCPP dollars for these positions as it is not in the RCPP contract.
 - Chris Borden stated the RCPP money could free up other NRCS dollars to help these positions.
 - Positions only created if a “need” is proven for these positions, hence 2017 start date. Need has to be proven in 15/16.
 - Dan Eklund brought up the worry of too many landowners left in the “hopper”
 - Not all landowners are getting to the NRCS application process.
 - Truly are oversubscribed even with only 50 applications.
 - Dan Eklund’s main RCPP question is who will coordinate the RCPP process.
- Webless Grant (USFWS)
 - Monitoring grant
 - Tom Cooper asked to reduce request amount
 - Requested amount \$111,000
 - Start date today – End Date Dec 31st 2018
 - Grant break down
 - WDNR piece pay for Curt Rollman
 - Piece pay for grad students, mainly for woodcock research
 - Enlist landowners to do their own monitoring. Citizen science.
 - Piece for website, increase monitoring information on the website.
- Dan Eklund will be creating a grant tracking spreadsheet.
 - Will be real time.
 - Information available to partners to track as money comes and goes.
 - Not for public distribution (Dan Eklund will hunt you down if you do!).
 - Match will be tracked as well.
- How to keep funding coming?
 - Dan Eklund’s plan is to keep people in beginning, middle, and end of the process.
 - Need to prove the good work we did with our current grants so we can reapply for some of these grants that are expiring soon. SFI is a prime example.
 - Expand our goals/habitat type focus? Increase pot of grants?
- Kurt Waterstradt asked when clarity can be received on RCPP and NFWF etc.
 - Craig Thompson responds in a couple of months the workload etc. should be clearer.
 - Currently understaffed as ABC forestry hiring did not go as planned.
- Dan Eklund brings the discussion to RCPP
 - RCPP contractor system (ABC and NRCS (contractors) – and partnership does work)

- Collaborative process
- What process do we want? Contractor vs. Collaborative
- Jeremy Holtz expressed concern about helping with match for RCPP but then did not get to sit in on the grant writing process. Scott Walters reiterated that sentiment.
- ABC has a lot of deliverables to meet because of RCPP
 - It will be their focus to work on RCPP in order to meet them
- Send RCPP questions to Dan Eklund. He will forward them to ABC and NRCS.
- Steering Committee approved Dan Eklund to gather RCPP questions on behalf of the Partnership.
 - Send RCPP questions to Dan Eklund.

E. Personnel Subcommittee—Habitat Coordinator Report & Work Plan—Jeremy & Callie

- Work planning meetings with Dan Eklund/Jeremy Holtz and associated staff.
 - Steering Committee approves of them. They will continue semi-monthly.
 - Important to continue these meetings as workload keeps increasing.
- Craig Thompson will no longer be on the personal sub-committee
 - Callie Bertsch will be the ABC rep.
- Jeremy Holtz expressed concern about the workload associated with RCPP. Will Callie be able to do her current duties PLUS RCPP?
 - Craig responds ABC is having internal discussions on Callie's workload.
- Jeremy handed out minutes from 6/15/2015 subcommittee meeting. Electronic version available.
 - Coordinator job has grown way beyond initial PD as the partnership has grown.
 - Initial goals have fallen by the wayside as workload has grown.
 - Curt Rollman hired on for technician level work
 - As coordinator's goals change there is a possibility to change technician PD and position title.
- Last personnel subcommittee meeting expressed concern about coordinator position not being able to focus on the PD.
 - Coordinator was allowed to focus on NRCS deliverables in the beginning to meet demand. It turned into the culture and turned focus away from other tasks in PD.
 - Coordinator funded by 1/3 NRCS, 1/3 USFS, 1/3 ABC.
 - NRCS 1/3 came with deliverables.
- Coordination was always the goal of the position from the partnership's perspective.
- Callie Bertsch requested a better understanding of her position from all the partners.
 - Dan Eklund stated that site visits were never a main focus of the coordinator's position.
 - Chris Borden stated NRCS may have focused too much on site visits for her.
- The partnership needs to reaffirm the expectations for the coordinator position.
 - Craig Thompson reiterates this need.
 - Need to have clearly defined steps in the YFI process. When does the coordinator stop following an application?
 - If the coordinator sends a landowner to a partner (NRCS, USFWS, etc.) there needs to be an understanding of what work will get done.
- Question posed to the steering committee, what is the role of a coordinator?

- Forest Service (Dan Eklund) sees the coordinator as a person to work with all the partner's staff to get the work done in the field and begin the appropriate application processes.
- Dan Eklund's general process (beautiful flow chart on the whiteboard).
 - Landowners
 - Landowners to Coordinator to field staff (employees of partners and CPWs) of these different funding sources (RCPP(NRCS),NFWF, RGS, Partners, Others). Field staff goes meets with the landowner and then tells the coordinator where to point the landowner as far as funding. Then the funding source can take the landowner from there to get the application done and work done on the ground. (NRCS, USFWS, RGS, etc.).
 - There has been a breakdown on steps in the process. Too much is put on the coordinator. The employees of partners in the process have been putting their work on the coordinator. Some employees have not been following through on their workload. I.E. NRCS DC not following through on the EQIP application process and just giving it back to the coordinator.
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- Kurt expressed concern that there is PROGRAM staff but not necessarily FIELD staff. Program staff can sign the contracts etc., but NOT the field visits. UFWS biologists do not have time to meet with landowners. They need the process much farther than that before they get involved.
 - Chris says NRCS is building their FIELD staff capacity.
- Chris asked when does the coordinator not get involved?
 - Person walks into a NRCS office asking about YFI. Does that go back to the coordinator first? Dan says if the coordinator did not exist what would NRCS do?
- "Field Staff" (current and additions)
 - Farm Bill
 - RGS
 - LTE
 - CPWs (Contractor foresters)
 - NRCS Staff
 - ABC Foresters
 - Dan, Jeremy
- Callie on the coordinator bottleneck
 - NRCS deadlines become a bottleneck
 - Focuses on NRCS deadlines to meet deliverables
 - Communication can become a bottleneck
 - Landowners meet with so many people in the process.
 - CPWs, Callie, Field Staff, etc. can be overwhelming
- Craig expressed worry about the coordinator having to hand hold a landowner from beginning to end.
- Coordinator requirements because of funding
 - NFWF
 - Forester trainings
 - Coordination with CPWs
 - NRCS
 - Landowner contact

- Coordination of site visits
 - Applications X
 - Complete all NRCS steps on application
 - Conservation plans
 - NHI reviews etc.
 - USFS
 - No deliverables
 - Goal was to work through the backlog of landowners
- Amber requested a closer look at a flow chart that was creating when the coordinator was initially hired.
 - Review the flow chart
- Scott Walters expressed that some PF biologists may be able to help.
- Steering committee agrees to hand off the coordinator discussion to the executive committee/personell committee
 - A meeting will be scheduled to discuss the coordinators PD. Participating member will be ABC (Craig), NRCS (Chris), Dan, and Jeremy.

12:30am Outreach Subcommittee—Amber

- Logo discussion
 - Logo approved by the committee.
 - Request for high resolution logo.
 - Craig will get a high resolution logo. High res .jpeg and .ets
- Folder design
 - Need to have a unified design for all outreach materials.
- Brochure
 - Working on the text for the brochure.
 - Second draft sent out to outreach subcommittee.
- Outreach subcommittee
 - Looking for new members
 - Send Amber an email if interested
- Website
 - SFI funds being used to develop landowner case studies
 - Highlight variety of habitats, cost-sharing, programs
 - Amber requested landowner suggestions
 - Jeremy and Callie are confident they can get landowners.
- Scott suggested a roll-up poster to promote YFI.
 - Kurt used it in Iowa Co. to good success.
- Scott suggested a placemat idea.
 - Only take a couple cents to produce.
 - Hand out to local diners and the word gets spread out quickly and effectively.

1:00 pm Monitoring focal species update—Amber, Jeff

- Monitoring plan
 - 3 entity monitoring program
 - 3 Graduate Students (2 yet to be determined)
 - Need to re-evaluate monitoring needs soon

- Where to discuss? Next steering committee meeting? Tabled to later meeting.

1:15 pm Discussion on conservation delivery—Jeremy, Kurt

- Jeremy gave a powerpoint presentation giving background on the creation of the original goals and objectives of the partnership.
 - Email Jeremy for access to PPT.
 - Focal areas created at township level where GWWA and Woodcock models overlap.
 - Focus of 6 county area.
 - Increased to 21 county area with NRCS focus.
- Future Goals (Jeremy's PPT)
 - Jeremy proposes expanding the 6 core counties to 16 based on original focal areas.
 - Craig suggested looking at Karner Blue Butterfly plan as they as using the shifting mosaic model as well.
 - Currently the partnership can not create the acreage required from the models for Woodcock and GWWA (211,493 new acres per year statewide).
 - Expand focal tree species?
 - White birch, red maple, jack pine, oak
 - Expand focal species?
 - Mention other species that benefit from young forest. I.E. Whip-poor-will
 - Jeremy's goals
 - Keep landowners in every stage of the process
 - Every landowner needs a plan
 - Process needs to become self-sustaining in areas
 - Need to expand timber acres
 - Jeremy's ideas
 - Peer to peer learning
 - Look into a referral benefit given to landowners?
 - Better way to handle funds/applications
 - Improve stability of the executive committee
 - Staggered terms on the committee
 - Eventually this Partnership needs to consider developing a full time leadership position
 - Functional partnership needs to support its operational infrastructure
 - Steering committee needs to steer
 - Request for the steering committee to review the points made in the PPT and come back to the next meeting with discussion on these points.
 - Kurt offered a financial analysis document on habitat work on private lands.
 - Less focus on mailings in the future would be ideal
 - Use WISFRS to find MFL plans with aspen cuts coming due. Contact landowners to break up the blocks and count the acreage.

2:15 pm Next meetings—Jeremy

- Steering committee
 - Conference call to organize full partnership meeting
 - Executive committee will also organize full partnership meeting
- Full Partnership meeting
 - Sometime in September – doodle poll incoming
 - Two day meeting with field aspect to look at the “success of the ground”

2:30 pm adjourn

- Motion to adjourn passed.