

**Natural Resources Advisory Board
January 24, 2019 Meeting Minutes**

Call to Order

Roll Call

Board Members Present:

Jerry Hiller	Scott Bryant	Marshall Douglas	Matt Langendorf
Marcia Polhamus	John Fleischli	Darel Martin	Tim Caughran
Mick Wanless			

Guests Present:

Ken Polhamus	Dave Freeman	Michael Rasmussen
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IDNR Staff Present:

Director Rosenthal	Steve Baggerly	Kathy Barker	Judy Bauer
Kevin Irons	Mike McClelland	Mark Alessi	Tim Schweizer
Chris Young	Tami Evans	Ed Cross	

Adoption of January 24, 2019 Agenda - Scott Bryant motioned to accept the January 24, 2019 agenda; Jerry Hiller provided the second.

Adoption of November 19, 2018 Meeting Minutes – Jerry Hiller motioned to accept the November 19, 2019 meeting minutes; Matt Langendorf provided the second.

Scott asked where the department was with the appropriation for the waterfowl stamp monies. Director Rosenthal stated that it will need to be brought up with the new legislature; it did not get called in Veto session.

OSLAD/LWCF Grants – Steve Baggerly – OSLAD hearings were held on January 22, 2019. The NRAB subcommittee of Scott Bryant, Marcia Polhamus, Tm Caughran and Matt Langendorf participated in the meeting. 95 communities/entities gave three-minute presentations on their proposed projects. \$29 million in funding is

available this fiscal year. 89 OSLAD applications and projects were recommended to move forward for approval by the subcommittee. Four of the 89 projects meet the definition of economically distressed community. Four alternates were also approved should a project fall out. Two projects using LWCF funds were also recommended for approval.

Scott thanked grants staff for the dedication they put forth in this process. For the first time he has been involved in the OSLAD process, a lot of different areas throughout the state will receive grant funding that normally aren't able to. It is the recommendation of the subcommittee, and Scott's motion that all 89 projects are recommended for funding, along with the LWCF projects and be forwarded to the director for final approval. Matt provided the second and stated that the IDNR staff did an outstanding job throughout this process. No opposition was heard; motion carried.

Asian Carp Update – Kevin Irons –Through no fault of our own, Illinois is right in the middle of this issue simply because of geography - the Mississippi River Basin and the Great Lakes region. IDNR has worked very hard to resolve the Asian carp issue and is leading the nation in these efforts.

There are four different species of Asian carp; Silver Head, Big Head, Grass and Black Carp. Asian carp were brought into the US in the 1970's and are one of the most invasive fish in the United States. Although not normally seen, Asian carp thrive in the larger river systems, and are found throughout the United States. They are very abundant, and it is estimated that there are 12.7 metric ton of fish within a mile stretch of the Illinois River. In 2002, the US Army Corps of Engineers installed the first demonstration electric barrier to keep Asian carp out the Great Lakes. Three of the world's largest, technologically advanced electric barriers are now in place. Adult fish cannot swim through these barriers.

In 2010, IDNR received federal funding through the Great Lake's Restoration Initiative that helped put IDNR programs in place and people on the water in the upper Illinois waterways. There were 3 main goals. Detection – where are the fish, where are they not. Management & control – reduce Asian carp in the Illinois River and prevent them from moving into new water bodies. Response – a contingency plan; a preplanned way of attaching emergencies.

Asiancarp.us is a multi-agency collaboration that shows where we are and what is being done. The 2019 plan is in place and there are over 20 science driven projects out there. A lot of work has been done in the Chicago canals to ensure that Asian carp are able to get into Lake Michigan. From Starved Rock to the Brandon Road Lock and Dam about 1 million pounds of fish are taken per year by commercial fisherman; 1.3 million pounds were taken in 2018. Asian carp have not been found above Brandon Road Lock & Dam, and only one fish has been found above the barrier. The barriers are not being challenged. Since 2010, 7.7 million pounds of Asian carp have been removed. The goal is to maximize removal.

In 2019, IDNR will start focusing on Peoria and down river, and will be asking commercial fisherman if willing, to contract with IDNR through a contractor for an additional 10 cents a pound in removing Asian carp from Peoria to Starved Rock. Several companies take the fish and process them for non-human consumption such as fish oil, all-natural pet treats and lobster bait. Lobster fisherman in Nova Scotia and Maine do not have bait this next year. Illinois could be a source for lobster bait that could save the lobster fishing industry. IDNR is also launching a market value program for Illinois businesses should they need to develop their business plan further. There is about an \$8,000 reimbursement grant that could allow them to travel for manufacturing equipment to assist in making their product successful. Another marketing issue is the Silver Carp. Several Springfield restaurant's serve them.

Jerry asked if we are winning the battle, and if there are problems in local lakes such as Rend Lake. Kevin stated yes; outreach programs help with invasive species efforts. Asian carp don't reproduce in lakes.

John asked if the end goal is complete eradication? The goal is to manage the issue and provide a natural balance.

Mick asked if other states are working as hard as IDNR. No, but they are all concerned, and we do work closely with them.

Kevin shared a power point presentation with the board and provided an in-depth overview of what IDNR is doing as a state in resolving the Asian carp issue.

Upland Game Update – Mark Alessi – Mark provided a power point presentation and an update on the Habitat Team concept component, a stepdown implementation version of the Farmland Prairie Campaign which came from the Wildlife Action Plan. The end goal of the Habitat Team concept is to have 4 teams throughout the state that would work primarily on public lands dedicating time towards habitat management & establishment.

There is a habitat team currently in Gibson City, dedicated to the Sibley area. A considerable amount of time is spent managing close to 3,000 acres for grassland habitat. Due to retirements and other things that have occurred, the team is down to one employee. Volunteers along with other division staff have assisted with burning 1,100 acres, tree removal and brohm for warm seedling grasses. The program is currently in the rebuilding phase and have hired a natural resource coordinator which helps with boots on the ground, a biologist to assist with the day to day operations and a natural resource technician which is extremely critical to help the operation for its equipment needs. Additional natural resource technicians have been posted; if you know of anyone, please tell them to apply.

Quail and pheasant numbers are in decline. Between the 2016/2107 and 2017/2018 season we did see a little bump in the wild pheasant harvest. A few more hunters were out, and we saw an increase in pheasant harvest. Quail did decline, mainly due to lack of habitat. There was a small bump in the farm bill for CRP acreage. The more CRP acres we can get out, the more wildlife will respond.

IDNR has a free upland permit reservation system that is available to anyone that is interested in hunting at a state site. There is a lot of demand, but supply is limited. IDNR recently purchased with Pittman Robertson money, the Chatsworth Habitat Area, a 160-acre parcel in Livingston county. IDNR is also looking to purchase a satellite of Perdueville Pheasant Habitat area in Champaign County, another 160 acres of safe habitat that we hope to have enrolled in the upcoming hunting season. These areas of the state are in the heart of the pheasant population.

Another initiative staff have been working on is to establish a quail focal area in Illinois that will follow the NBCI guidelines. The Burning Star Management Plan has been successfully executed and is a federally acquired site in southwest

Illinois. It's a relatively new site with limited hunting practices in place. This provides an opportunity to establish a focal area, and allows IDNR to work with Southern Illinois University, and other partners in focusing resources for quail. The property is approximately 4,500 acres in size.

Jerry asked if there is anything we can do to bring pheasants to southern Illinois. It's not likely.

Scott asked why Illinois has such different farming practices than other states. Couldn't there be incentive to hold off; everything is plowed under. Mark added that he wouldn't expect a significant impact to wildlife.

Darel asked how birds get started in new habitat areas. They will just move in; there is enough natural habitat.

John stated that Jim Edgar has had a quail area for 30 years. Why this site, not Jim Edgar? This area was selected because there is not much already established. There are other factors that go into the selection of an NBCI focal area. Already established programs can interfere and mask results of a focal area. The director added that part of this is working with NBCI and following their criteria. A release program at Jim Edgar immediately took it out. John added if deer were in decline this would be a different story and that he hoped that the department can look at reversing the trend for quail. Neighboring states seem to be working to reverse that trend.

Proposed Turkey Rules Update – Mark Alessi – IDNR's plan was to model the turkey regulatory bag limit season dates, permitting, etc., after the waterfowl 5-year plan process. This will culminate in a 5-year plan where decisions will be made on how to move forward for the next 5 years. We had a meeting with constituency groups in 2017. From that, IDNR had put a timeline together but has had to delay it due to staffing issues. IDNR's deer program does not have a project manager, and because of the importance of CWD, remaining staff have been focused on that. A forest wildlife program manager has recently been hired so we are starting to move forward on the 5-year plan. We will have the survey out following the end of the 2019 spring turkey season. The data collection is approximately 3 months long, and the report will be done by November 2019.

The 5-year turkey plan proposal will be shared with IDNR offices and the director, so they have an opportunity to be a part of the process, review any recommendations that come from our constituent groups and the turkey survey for an agency timeline of December 31, 2020 and implementation in the 2023 season. Implementation in 2023 is due to the fact that there may be law changes and to the administrative rule process.

Marcia asked about the review process, didn't we already review the changes in July 2017? It's already been two years. Are we going to start now? Is it still going to take 5 years? Mark added that 7-9 constituents had recommendations on things that they would like to see improved, anything from season length to shot size. We've made changes on the shot size and have begun implementing some other changes. Some things like bag limits and season lengths, season dates, we need to test it with our turkey hunting constituents so that we have a clear and representative picture of what our constituents support – are they satisfied with the current regulatory structure, etc. Because we delayed that component, to focus on CWD and the deer program, that part has been delayed, but we are focusing our attention back to it. We plan on having the turkey survey completed this year and then we will have time to look at what the data suggests, what can the turkey population handle in terms of liberalization, if any. The first and foremost focus is the biological side of this, and then the social side.

Marcia asked if the turkey tags will be sold over the counter for fall and spring or will that take 5 years as well. No – they are going over the counter. Mark will follow up.

Scott stated that we've sat in countless meetings over the last three or four years with constituent groups and we are no closer to changing any of this stuff than we were three years ago. And now we are going to run another survey when you have the Turkey Federation, IFOR and Whitetails Unlimited sitting in this room that represent thousands of people. It's a waste of money and time and everyone's tired of it. Mark identified that the best way we can get representative data from our broad constituency is through the survey. Scott added that there is a broad constituency of representatives right here that represent hundreds of thousands of people sitting at this table and we are considered as one person by you and your staff. Constituents want this changed; other states around us have a much easier system. Marcia added it's difficult to mentor anyone with this

system. It needs to be accessible and it needs to be easier. What questions and what kind of biology reports will be sent with the survey? We are still working on the questions to the survey. Scott added that it's hard to buy a turkey tag when it's so specific, a two-week opportunity will give people a chance. Marcia asked about the youth permit; why do we need a survey to tell us that a youth can use their permit for all five seasons? Mark stated that there is a large number of youth hunters, and it would exhaust quotas in some counties. John stated that biology certainly plays an important role, but it seems like the board is expressing frustration with the delays. There's got to be a balance. Mark stated that he agrees and understands the frustration, and that if there were staff and resources, there wouldn't be the delays. We have an understaffed program that oversees other types of regulations in the state, including CWD management. Mark identified that it's not an easy decision, but he had to make the decision to focus on CWD management. I assure you that we have started. We know the success of the 5-year waterfowl program plan is. A 5-year turkey plan will be transparent and when done will be a good process.

Attendance Policy – Marcia Polhamus – Marcia stated that we have discussed this time and time again. Is there a reason why we cannot or will not send a letter and ask for her resignation? Director Rosenthal stated that she is not responding to any contact. Tim asked if board members can reach out. It's the same core group that attends; the dedicated people are here. Scott asked how many vacancies there are. One, with three expired. Scott stated getting reappointed might be tough. Jerry asked if we have the authority to kick someone off the board, if not we should just go with the flow. No, we do not.

Scott said the problem is if we didn't have quorum we could not have voted on the OSLAD hearings today.

Marcia asked the board chair or the director to send an e-mail and ask for their resignation if they are not committed to participating board meetings.

Board Comments:

Tim asked if there was a timeline for the quail focal area and establishing of habitat at Burning Star. The program responsible for is vacant, but the biologist

has been given \$50,000 to get established. The plan of work process is occurring and will start in the next several months.

Scott stated that the partnership with IDOC for the IFOR Youth Retention Center in Pontiac has been shut down by IDNR. 500 acres of ground that would have reached thousands of kids outside of Chicago to learn about the outdoors, hunting and recreation was shut down by the heritage division. Everyone around this table is committed to teach kids. IFOR puts on a youth camp every year for 100 kids that costs about \$5,000. I've watched a half a million dollars be spent to touch about 300 hundred kids that I bet 50% are not retained. Director Rosenthal stated that he thought that had been turned around. Absolutely not. We're not digging or building. We sent an itinerary like we were asked to do. This kind of thing infuriates me. Watching this agency waste money on all the surveys at the Uofl and SIU, and we have a program ready to go and we are stopped. The director stated that the plans indicated that they were building on the property. We redid the letter after we talked. Tim asked what the reasoning was for stopping. An archaeological study was needed. We lease ground all over the state to farmers and others that don't require a study. The public and the hunting public is tired of this. There is zero transparency and the public doesn't trust this agency. I've spent 20 plus years to get kids in the outdoors and I am highly incensed over this.

John stated that if we are not the same board the next time, thanked the board for everything they have done.

Director's Comments.

This is the first I've heard that the IFOR project didn't go through. I thought it was done. The only opportunity I have is if you tell me.

I have not heard from anyone on the transition; I'll be here until I'm told otherwise. Thank you to everyone for your support.

PheasantFest is February 22-24, 2019 in Schaumburg. IDNR is a major sponsor.

IDNR is at 1146 employees. Staff have done a great job of keeping things going during very trying times. There are a lot of challenges ahead.

Scott asked where the surplus of money is from OSLAD since there was not an OSLAD program for the past two years. Director stated he would check with the Fiscal office.

Lonestar property near Starves Rock will undergo a one-year assessment, there could be an opportunity for an OHV park in this area.

Sahara woods is still moving forward.

158 Bobcats have been harvested since January.

Guest Comments:

Dave Freeman asked about Rend Lake. The RFP should be out in February. There are multiple vendors that have inquired, and everything is moving forward.

Meeting adjourned.