

**Wisconsin Conservation Congress**  
**2023 District 5 Fall Meeting**  
**Alma Courthouse, Alma, WI (Buffalo County)**

**Order of Business**

**1. Organizational Matters**

**1. Call to Order:** Kevin Smaby at 6:33pm

**B. Roll Call & Delegate Introductions**

**Buffalo** – Wes Domine, Don Baloun, Travis Burce, Dwight Ruff

**Excused:** Terri Roehrig

**Dunn-** Al Marotz, Gary Schwoch, Bill Briggs, Kellen Cassellius, Pearl Holmstead

**Eau Claire-** David Zielke, Steve Betchkal, Wayne Klett

**Excused:** Steve Wickman, Dennis Vanden Bloomen

**La Crosse-** Marc Schultz, Ted Eisenbacher, Kevin Smaby

**Excused:** Dan Heidel, Ray Heidel

**Pepin-**

**Excused:** Mike Hurlburt, Perry Hurlburt, Dan Hayden, Bill Yingst

**Unexcused:** Jake Pittman

**Pierce-** Chuck Boley, Bill Koller, Jason Brazzale, Lars Loberg, Hugh Hatch

**Trempealeau-** Chuck Gauger, Aaron Olson

**Excused:** Randy Kunsman, Randy Symicek

**Vernon-** Jason Leis, Kevin Sloane, Tim Morgan

**Excused:** Robert Budworth, Larry Dobbe

**C. Introductions of non-Conservation Congress delegates in attendance:**

**DNR:** Tyler Strelow, Law Enforcement Supervisor

Kris Johansen, Regional Wildlife Supervisor

Bob H., Fisheries

**2. Information Items and Program Updates**

**A. Department of Natural Resources Staff Updates:**

**Kris J. Wildlife Update:**

Updated the delegates on the passage of State budget and impacts to wildlife programs.

- Future deficit is looming, main concern is license fees have not seen any increase since 2005.
- Joint Finance short term fix is to transfer \$25M from forestry account, this will not solve the issue in the long run. Fees need to be addressed.
- Non-resident license fee increase will generate \$1M.

Discussion on why we do not charge other state hunters what we must pay to hunt/fish in their state. Consensus is non-resident licenses are too low.

- Wildlife staffing is looking good for 19 county region, only three vacancies.
- Wolf Plan is out.
- Elk northern and central herds are doing well. Black River Falls- 160+ calves have been collared. Clam Lake will have a season....overall it is going quite well.
- Deer are doing well despite the CWD issues.

Discussion: Concern with declining turkey numbers. Iowa study referenced, they are gps collaring hens and poults to look at nesting success rates and mortality rates on poults.

### **Tyler S. Law Enforcement Update**

Updated delegates on the new Division of Public Safety & Resource Protection. They are now part of a much bigger division.

- R3 setting up statewide position to manage the DNR shooting ranges. Also adding three new positions to work with outdoor skills/shooting sports.
- 80 events scheduled to introduce new folks to fishing. Using an R3 grant for funding.
- 8 new graduate wardens are being placed. New class of 12-20 planned for hire.
- They are actively working with Human Resources to get pay adjustments...WI wardens are significantly behind our surrounding states on salaries.
- Received funding for body cameras.... ½ of the staff will be equipped with hopes of funding for the other ½ soon.
- Looking at new records management system for enforcement actions. Using 5 or 6 other versions now so consistency is needed....long overdue!
- Rec-vehicle enforcement: 470,000 registered ATV/UTV's in the State. Accidents have doubled from last year.
- Snowmobiles: 230,000 registered. 16 fatalities....all speed/alcohol related incidents.
- Boating: incidents are down significantly. Wake boats are an issue. Some lake associations/townships looking at ordinances.
- Locally....typical summer, our region is fully staffed. Our region now includes Devils Lake which sees 20,000+/- new guests weekly....which has put a huge burden on staff.

### **Bob H. Fisheries**

Updated delegates on budget and impacts to Fisheries.

- They lost 5.5 FTE's. Over last 20 years they have reduced 45 total positions. Starting to have an impact on workload and identifying what gets dropped.
- Still hiring lots of folks in the biologists and habitat areas.
- New biologist for La Crosse, technician in Alma so the Mississippi crew is fully staffed.
- Last Spring Hearing focus on panfish has resulted in a new look at the 10-year-old plan. A new plan is in draft and coming out soon. All the resolutions focused on more restrictive bag limits.

Discussion: New technology available to fisherman and impacts on populations. Livescope (forward scanning) being the main concern. Fisheries is not going to touch the issue. Current thought is you still must make them bite so skill still needed. They are waiting on a report/analysis.  
Kettle Moraine Hatchery: still has issues and is a 50% production at best. St. Croix Hatchery: no report or information on damage.

Kris added a plug for the game brood surveys that are going on now. Check DNR website and join the effort.

## B. Conservation Congress Updates

### 1. Guidance for upcoming committee meetings:

Friendly reminders on how we interact with public. Resolution writers and public are feeling ignored or blocked out of the process/discussions. Need to listen and be respectful as we want them to treat us.

Understand your role on your committee assignments. You represent District 5. Prepare appropriately for the meeting....READ the Code of Procedures (COP).

**Attendance: contact the Chairperson or v. chairperson for excused absence.**

### 2. WCC advisory committee assignments:

**Contact your committee leadership one week before the meeting date to confirm you are attending or will be absent. It is not pleasant when members show up to find out they do not have a quorum.**

Kevin reviewed the committee assignments for District 5 delegates. Kevin will follow-up with leadership on the missing assignments.

#### **Discussion:**

Concerned was raised on why meeting minutes are not being posted timely or at all. This issue needs to be fixed!

Concern with how long it is taking so long to make committee assignments. This is creating conflict with scheduling meetings and meeting attendance, especially for those on more than one committee. The late scheduling is part of the problem with attendance....committee meetings are being packed into shorter time period. Need to fix this!

#### a. Review resolutions that originated from your district.

Kevin reviewed the resolutions and opened floor for comments on each one.

**Buffalo County:** Airboats – not an issue with over-bagging. Concern in La Crosse...seeing as 20-30 at one location. Upsets folks that walk (mile +) into sites, over difficult ice/terrain to get there and find it packed with airboats. Many are not guides but serve as taxis. Concern on the ethics.

**Dunn County:** No significant concern/discussion.

**Eau Claire:** No significant concern/discussion.

**La Crosse:** No significant concern/discussion.

**Pierce:** No significant concern/discussion.

**Vernon:** No significant concern/discussion.

General Discussion: Concern raised over shotgun resolutions and 3-2-1 rule. Still an issue that needs attention to maintain openness and fairness to all.

#### b. WCC advisory committee evaluation forms:

Kevin encouraged delegates to complete a form for their committee meetings.

c. Delegate reimbursement process:

Kevin reviewed the voucher process and indicated a W9 is required if you have not previously submitted one to DNR. Not an easy process so please review it thoroughly.

d. Unexcused Absences:

Kevin reiterated that the tolerance level is dropping and folks will be removed from committees and could be removed from WCC for continued unexcused absences.

### **3. Filling vacancies on county delegations:**

Trempealeau County still has one vacancy and they are doing their best to find an individual.

### **4. WCC Outreach:**

Kevin reviewed the need and options should you choose to present at a local event/meeting.

### **5. Youth Conservation Congress:**

Kevin and others identified a host of events that are planned. Such as:

- Lake Winnebago event this month
- YCC Sandhill meeting....planning a duck hunt as well.
- La Crosse ice fishing event
- Trap shooting event....huge success with over 150 schools hosting teams
- Youth Bear Hunt....huge success

### **3. Member's Matters:**

- Progress on meeting minutes. Where are they? Not getting posted even when they are completed and submitted timely. **NO EXCUSES FOR THIS! NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED AND FIXED.**
- Statement of support for Terri R. She is under appreciated and it is time for the WCC to recognize what we have in her talents and commitment. Need diversity in leadership so we resemble folks across the State. She is the solution for a future WCC.
- Much discussion and comments on Spring Hearing format. Unanimous support to go back to face-to-face meetings recognizing we need the hybrid version so participation can occur on-line. We will be in trouble if we stick with the Open House concept with the main concern being delegate elections. There is a path to doing face to face and on-line while allowing open voting. Concern was raised with a general lack of support from DNR. DNR is not the issue....STATE LEGISLATURE IS.....

Kevin issued final reminder on committee meetings and unexcused absences.

**4. Adjourn:** Motion by Travis B. Second: Wayne K. (8:55pm)