

UPHW/DWC Meeting Notes

June 21, 2016

River Rock Lanes and Banquette Center

Attendees: Warren Suchovsky, Randy Charles, Bernie Hubbard, George Lindquist, Steve Carson, Tim Baker, Don Mankee, Terry Minzey, Stacy Haughey, Jeff Stampfly, Pam Nankervis, and Jim Hammill

Updates

- Funding has been secured for Steve Carson at half-time next year
- Safari Club International met at Jays Sporting Goods on June 23 in Clare to discuss our financial needs for 2017 and beyond.
- Commissioner Richardson said the Department of Natural Resources will contribute funding for 2017. FRD will provide \$5K and WLD will provide \$10K.
- Jeff Joseph and Jim Hammill will be doing a TV shoot in Rhinelander on June 30th. The program will be about Hemlock regen on a Weyerhaeuser project in the Menege Creek area. Don Mankee should be involved as well.
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Plan Status

Initially there were 57 plans proposed. Currently with the combining of polygons and some areas dropped we are at 46 plans. 25 plans are complete and 3 are in draft form. There are 8 large complexes and 10 small (<5 acres) left. At the next meeting we will discuss the ten smaller complexes. Maybe these could be bundled into the overarching document and not need an individual plan for each area.

Of these ten, a few do not have the population and we cannot find evidence that deer are using the area during the winter.

- Marquette County complex south of Witch Lake – was occupied in 2013. There were no observations in 2016. The polygon identified needs some work. Residents in the area are feeding the deer in winter.
- AuTrain and Grand Marais areas – supplemental feeding by residents in town. **Mr. Minzey** said if people stopped supplemental feeding the deer would die. - Is there enough to warrant the effort or a habitat GIS analysis when the population is not there and people are feeding the deer? There are no longer any deer wintering near Grand Marais Creek. Those animals have been drawn into town by supplemental feeding operations. The polygon, as shown no longer exists. Rather the deer spend winter in and around town

- Cusino area – is a high snow depth area. How many deer would be supported if not being fed? The deer trap and tag effort of the 1960's showed a summer range polygon which filled in the gap from the deer trapped and tagged in the south and east. **Mr. Minzey** said historically, the complex was much larger with a significant amount of strip cutting in the cedar east of Melstrand. In spite of this cutting activity, deer in the Melstrand area could not survive the difficult winters and by 1963 that portion of the complex collapsed and deer wintered only in the southern portion of the complex; along the Metzger Grade. In the early and mid-1990's biologists could physically count ~400 deer in the winter cedar cuttings. Since that time, however, supplemental feeding activities have drawn the deer out of that area and most are now associated with a supplemental feeding operation to the west.

Mr. Hammill asked if historically, the distribution of winter deer is higher in the higher snowfall areas and now with the potential habitat, will we be able to support and rehab the area? What is the wisest use of our time and effort? Concentrate on areas with < 100" snow depth or do both?

Mr. Minzey said historic patterns in the Eastern Upper Peninsula show that the wintering complexes occurred away from the lakeshores, in small insular pockets. With all the logging occurring right after WWII, cuttings occurred all winter, logging roads were maintained and there was a food source. This enabled the deer to move easily and have food all winter. That scenario was not sustainable over time as subpopulations died out during difficult winters. The only animals that survived were those that migrated further to the south. The result was a shifting of the winter populations away from more northern areas to, generally speaking, the Lake Michigan shore.

Mr. Stampfly added that when the Department of Corrections eliminated Cusino Prison, the 5 acre cuts they did each winter stopped occurring. Maintaining an annual 5 to 10 acre cutting program is not feasible with the larger commercial logging operators. The predator load also increased as shown by the 1970 pellet study data.

It was asked if we are ecologically doing anything differently on the lands recently sold by Heartland Forest Group to Hancock Forest Resources. With the change in ownership on some of the CFA lands, is there a change in values? In meetings with the new owners, there aren't any major changes in management. They are SFI certified and might also be FSC certified as well. In the past we have partnered in

the underplanting of 150 – 200K white pine, hemlock, and oak trees. The new owners are interested in pursuing partnership projects in the future.

Mr. Lindquist agreed that there is more potential for deer in the south because of the lower snow depth. There are large voids on the landscape in the middle between the north and south complexes. Something needs to be done on the landscape to bridge the gaps. He would like to see something done with the smaller yards in the north

Mr. Minzey said that even in the mildest of winters with 21/2 feet of snow under the Hemlock, the habitat cannot support deer. There is no food and deer cannot move.

Shelter in the complexes

Our complex objectives are 50% food – Aspen and Hardwood and 50% shelter with a high canopy conifer and Cedar and Hemlock.

It was shown that the buck-kill data is related to the shelter conditions ranging higher in the south, then the east, then Iron County, then the lowest in Hemlock in the east. From the camp survey cards from the Iron County DMU, there was a 13:1 adult doe to buck ratio.

If the percentage of shelter is low, what can be done?

In the east with complexes greater than 50% shelter, 5-10% of that is in secondary shelter with a majority of balsam fir on the edges of cedar areas. Our approach in the plans includes a Spruce budworm guidance page and a spruce/fir habitat page that recommends targeting these types of cover to increase food. Cutting these types would likely regenerate aspen. **Mr. Hammill** said that this is a more important issue in the east due to non-winter range that is available. We need to make certain we are correct with our percentages and doing the things we are discussing. We have more control in the east because the complexes are mainly in areas that are managed by the USFS and the DNR.

Recap – DWC landowner letters

Gary Willis worked with the Conservation Districts to mail over 2,400 landowners with 20+ acres in or adjacent to the DWC. 60% of these landowners are out of state or downstate and most likely would not have been reached by other media methods. Mr. Willis' time and the mailings were supported by a Forest Stewardship grant secured by FRD. Two meetings were held in the WUP with approximately 180 in attendance. About 25% of the audience appeared to be

planners and many of the landowners were engaged with the planners after the meeting. Another meeting is scheduled in July. There is discussion to hold a meeting for the landowners in Marquette, Alger, and Dickinson Counties.

Mr. Suchovsky would like to know if information on CWD could be addressed in our outreach along with how feeding affects the behavior in deer. Would we be able to include information in the letters?

Ms. Nankervis added in response to Mr. Suchovsky's suggestion to do more public relations about CWD, that we could be adding disease control into our public meeting discussions as another benefit for improving winter habitat. By creating more winter habitat we spread out the deer which in turn helps to prevent the nose to nose contact and spreading of disease such as CWD, it would also help eliminate the need to feed deer in high concentrations. Also, increasing optimal winter habitat will help distribute deer and make it harder for predators to seek out concentrated deer populations.

The healthiest systems are spread out which also makes it harder for predators to seek out concentrated deer.

SNODAS – snow depth grids

Snow depth grids created by Shawn O'Neil from MTU were shown for days >12" depth by winters and the correlation to buck kills. The data is located at: NSIDC.org/data/902158.

Year	Snow days < 100"	% change in buck kill
2004	62	17
2008	96	-15
2009	97	-30
2010	70	27
2011	67	2
2012	41	20
2013	94	-20
2014	119	-33
2015	96	-17
2016	51	NA

This information is:

- Easy for the public to access and download

- A simple visual of the winter severity
- The best correlation between mildest/severe winter and buck kill
- A demonstration that an average winter effect is inconsistent in buck kills

We can develop DMUs historically impacted by high snow depths using the SNODAS information as an overlay to make predictions. How do we capture the lag in reproduction that does not occur?

Mr. Hammill said this data drives the herd and makes predictions and shows patterns regardless of the biology regardless of what regulations are applied.

Mr. Lindquist asked if we could do habitat work in the Harvey/Lake LeVasseur area since the winters are milder in this area.

Mr. Suchovsky asked if there is a trend in the snow depths and intensity of the storms. Do we need to incorporate anything regarding climate predictions into the long-range plans of the DWC?

Station data in the UP is very cyclic. One of the trends is an increase in the Marquette snow depths.

Conifer Planning Sites: Hemlock and White pine Potential Evaluation Locations
The goal is to learn from all landowners involved. Find out what worked and what did not both inside and outside winter range areas. What different harvest methods were used? What was the snow depth? Look at the success of regen. Is there a cohesive document discussing success/failure in alternate types of cutting (shelterwood with reserves)?

Evaluation/Recommendation Considerations:

- Location relative to winter range – 70% of the UP is not in winter range
- Timing relative to winter range
- Economics of silvicultural methods
- Esthetics – cedar strip vs. irregular shelterwood cut
- Climate change consideration – what site species has the best chance of persistence?

MTU Professors

Mr. Hammill met with professors from Tech who would like to initiate a large scale stewardship proposal across the UP. This would include wooded wetlands, regeneration, and working with private landowners. There is the possibility for

monitoring and evaluating success/failure finding out what methods would succeed. Economic factors would be included. We then could move forward with large scale grants. **Mr. Hammill** would like to meet with the subgroup (Joseph, Hubbard, Stampfly, Stier, Joseph, Scullon and Suchovsky) to discuss this opportunity. Very much in line with Mr. Charles' vision from previous meetings – large scale grant work across the entire landscape. This is the high point of the efforts of this workgroup.

Closing comments

Mr. Suchovsky conducted a tour on his forest area and noted that a lot more cedar are coming up more so in the last year or two. There is still a lot of deer activity. Oak is also regenerating as well. **Mr. Carson** said this ties in with a webinar that shows the same regen in Maine with similar effects from the same type of experimental irregular shelterwood cedar cuts.

Mr. Lindquist commented on the LIP plantings in east Alger County from 10 years ago. White pine and Hemlock are doing well, which is good because we are losing so much Beech to Beech bark disease.

Next meeting will be Tuesday August 30th. Invitations have been extended to the climate specialists from the DNR as well as Gary Roloff from MSU on the hardwood regeneration study.