

## UPWH/DWC Meeting

December 14, 2015  
Red Rock Lanes and Banquet Center  
Ishpeming, Michigan

### Committee members present:

J.R. Richardson, Tim Baker, Randy Charles, Bernie Hubbard, Jeff Joseph, George Lindquist, Terry Minzey, Dennis Nezich, Eric Stier, Warren Suchovsky, and Matt Watkeys

### Attendees:

Brian Bogaczyk, Steve Carson, Bob Doepker, Alan Ettenhofer, Stacy W. Haughey, Dr. Bob Heyd, Erin Johnston, Lowell Larson, Marc Miller, G. Dale McNamee, Pam Nankervis, Bill Scullon, and Monica Weis

### Meeting Notes:

#### General Updates:

Mr. Minzey summarized the 2015 deer season to date. The buck harvest is 15% lower than last year's 14,750 buck taken over a 17,000 sq. mi. range. About 20% of the bucks taken this year were yearlings, in a good year that number would be near 50%. The harvest of both 3.5 and 4.5 year old bucks was above last year's harvest. This is a significant harvest of older bucks which causes some concern for next year.

CWD was recently confirmed in Wisconsin. Mr. Minzey said the animal showed no clinical signs of the disease and was from a facility located in Three Lakes. This is within 30 miles of the Michigan border. Wildlife Division will be asking that deer harvested in Iron and Gogebic counties be brought in for testing. When working for the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Mr. Miller stated that most of the land surrounding the CWD hot-zones was 98% private ownership. The Department reduced the deer density, keeping the herd around 1% to keep the disease under control. The disease is growing in the Wisconsin deer herd, approximately 1 or 2 out of 5 deer are infected in the endemic area and the population is spreading out. What Michigan needs to do is have the biologists communicate with the hunters to prevent the spread of the disease rather than have a legislative mandate addressing the situation. It is tough for Michigan since Wisconsin is not taking any strong actions to prevent the spread of CWD. They reduced the number of deer being tested this year. Ms. Haughey indicated that we could meet and discuss CWD issues with Wisconsin.

#### Spruce Budworm:

Dr. Heyd gave a Spruce Budworm (SBW) presentation to the group, highlighting the key points of this native pest affecting Balsam fir (Bf) and White spruce (Wspr). The outbreak cycle occurs every 30 – 50 years in the northeaster US. Currently we are at the beginning of the next regional

outbreak. Over-age Bf and Wspr resources are most susceptible to damage. The SBW feeds on younger fir needles in late spring/early summer. Trees mainly in the edges, openings, and the understory are especially susceptible to damage. After a few years of defoliation, the stand will show signs of top-kill. Tree mortality occurs five years after infestation affecting 67% of Bf and 42% of Wspr.

In the last outbreak, in 1980 Michigan 859,000 acres were affected. Population began collapsing in 1981 with 161,000 acres affected. 1982 had 116,000 acres showed affects. During the 80's the mortality of spruce/fir was mapped on 519,000 acres.

Of the 1 million acres of Bf/Wspr, about 20% is on State forest land. To help combat the SBW the State manages for uniform story Bf/Wspr stands and encourages hardwood components. There are also harvests outside of years of rotation if the stands show impacts of SBW. Bf has a 50 year rotation period and Wspr has a 70 year rotation. The State is managing for even-aged well stocked stands with clear cuts to avoid leaving few sticks of Bf and Wspr. By looking at the value, risk, and accessibility of impacted Bf/Wspr stands, harvest can occur to utilize the trees before mortality occurs. The stand will regenerate and regenerate well after harvesting. Spraying could occur in areas of State owned land in Deer Winter Complexes. In the past, some stands were sprayed for a number of years to protect the older trees to save the thermal cover.

Mr. Carson showed that Iron County seems to be the main area where Bf is the main cover type. Bf is a short-lived species, but there are other species available for cover. About 70% of the shelter in the West Iron County and the Deerfoot Lodge DWCs are dependent on secondary shelter, primarily Bf/Wspr. For these two DWCs a spruce/fir type page and an SBW consideration page were added. In the spruce/fir page and habitat recommendation page recommended strategies to deal with SBW was added. This information was taken from key literature including Heyd's information. We should identify areas of infestation, addressing the most vulnerable stands and decreasing the vulnerabilities. Mr. Carson included these two pages as handouts and asked the Group to offer feedback. One of the recommendations was to include White pine plantings after harvest, especially in the Iron County plans. It was discussed that in Iron County if we cut all the Bf and Wspr we will lose the cover type. Should we target the mature Bf and Wspr and leave the rest for stand diversity? The leave trees would be less susceptible to SBW; would they still get hit if left in the Bf/Wspr stands? That type of harvest would lead to an uneven-aged stand which is more susceptible to SBW. We should focus on retention of other species. Mr. Nezich suggested striking the Black spruce recommendation because silviculturally we harvest the Black spruce in the Bf/Wspr stands. If we take the trees with less than a 4" dba, we would create a two-story stand. We should instead increase the White pine and hardwood component in these stands. That type of detail should be discussed at the operation level of the DWC plans.

Mr. Joseph said the in the Deerfoot DWC, in the mixed stands consisting of hemlock, cedar, and Bf/Wspr Plum Creek harvests out the Bf/Wspr component. It is less than 40% of the stands. They are looking to underplant with White pine. Is there any spruce that is less susceptible to SBW? Experimentation was conducted, but do not have the results as the study was ended prematurely. Plum Creek is looking for spruce that shows some resistance to SBW and is planting some of them in Maine. Norway spruce is not a good option.

Mr. Stier asked how the private landowners are counseled. The State and corporate ownership is aware and on board with these issues? How do we communicate the short-term loss of spruce to the long-term gains of managing for the future? Mr. Richardson suggested television outreach Michigan Outdoors for example. Mr. Watkeys said the Conservation District is strongly suggesting White pine plantings. There is outreach with the public through their spring tree sales.

### **Plan and web updates:**

Mr. Carson shared with the Group updates on the plans and web page. Conservation District forester assistance contact information and was added to the summary page and in the beginning as well. This way the public would not have to search through the entire document for the information.

Keweenaw Bay Indian Community (KBIC) and the Ottawa National Forest (NF) have updated the Sturgeon River DWC. The Ottawa NF added US Forest Service specific cover type details, a habitat page, and an appendix. In the appendix is a page regarding tree planting in areas with high deer browse issues. The appendix will be added to the over-arching deer winter range plan document.

Ms. Nankervis is working with the Ottawa NF foresters to create general silvicultural guidelines for habitat types and then reference for specific operational plans for the cover types. Ms. Nankervis is trying to incorporate DWC issues into their management plans by working closely with the foresters. This will also help provide information to private landowners as well.

Mr. Carson mentioned the Menega and Huron Mountain DWCs respectively have 89% and 96% private land ownership. This is the location of the joint Hemlock project between Plum Creek and the Department of Natural Resources. Boomhouse and Indian Lake DWCs located in Schoolcraft County have much less private ownership in each most of the ownership is with the Hiawatha NF. Both are cedar dependent and close to the 50/50 shelter food ratio. The next round of plans to be drafted includes DWCs in Iron and Dickinson counties.

### **Operational Planning:**

Mr. Carson is working with multiple planning scales:

1. The UP scale which is general DWC establishing the 50/50 shelter/food ratio
2. The individual DWC scale – utilizing the UPHW/DWC strategic plans by looking at land ownership and making habitat strategy recommendations
3. Ownership specific – inventory for one ownership and customize a strategic plan for cover types. These are ownership specific planning activities/products not workgroup documents but draw from the information in the UPHW DWC plans.

These multiple planning scales mirror what Ms. Nankervis is working on with the Ottawa NF. The Hiawatha NF has a similar approach to their management plan as well. They use the 1.2 aspen emphases by management unit.

On the State forest plan, for the cover type, it is scaled down by resources: cover type, acres, and percent of the total. Operation plans are formulated based on the most critical cover type in that ownership. These DWC plans will guide an approach to work with Forest Resources Division

(FRD) on how to operationally manage State forest lands in individual DWC's. The operational planning incorporates the workgroup objectives from the UPHW DWC plans and uses that information to help guide in creating the WLD, Ottawa NF, and Hiawatha NF plans. The finest scale uses inventory for one ownership by cover type and manages the forest for what the owner wishes to achieve. These fine scale operational plans are not UPHW products but implementation of UPHW DWC strategies incorporated by individual landowners wishing to manage for wintering deer.

Mr. Joseph said Plum Creek has a GIS layer that prompts a DWC warning. A drop down with management objectives/recommendations would be helpful. Mr. Stier asked if Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI) has a query for DWCs. Many Commercial Forest Stewardship Plans requires a check of MNFI. There is progress to provide these types of information to the conservation districts and consulting foresters, and private individuals. Mr. Carson is hoping to see all this information combined on an interactive GIS map with links for additional information.

Mr. Richardson spoke about the winter range prioritizations. We are making progress. It was discussed on how we get parcels on the list. We should be getting recommendations from the group rather than putting the pressure on the Group by voting for parcels. We got a little ahead of the process. There is a peer review matrix for evaluating parcels, the Winter Habitat Conservation Initiative Parcel Attribute form. This is a good guiding document for the Group to use in selecting a piece of property to be added to the list. Perhaps we could have a DNR person explain to the Group on how land is purchased, what is the selection criterion, funding issues, how the land cap comes into play, etc. In short what do we need to do in order for the DWC parcels to get top priority?

Mr. Suchovsky discussed basing the economic value on the acreage that is being managed. Build on the model of the Golden-winged warbler forest management program: public acquisition of land is not necessary, but creates a monetary benefit for the landowner if they manage their land such that it meets program objectives. Can deer management program funds be used to compensate land owners for the loss, or differed, of timber sale revenue instead of purchasing land? We would be spending public money to reward landowners for maintaining and food in the DWCs. Could this be considered as the purchase of timber rights on small privately owned land so that timber management would be compatible with deer winter habitat needs in specific wintering areas?

Mr. Charles brought up the Land and Water Conservation Fund (L&WCF) the Federal government uses to purchase land. The monies in the \$20 billion fund come from off-shore well drilling. The Federal government would like the States to utilize the monies for land purchases. The idea is for a holistic approach, purchasing lands that are in proximity or adjacent to other ownerships. The ownership of the newly acquired land through the L&WCF would go to the nearest entity. We would be able to work with private landowners. Colorado used \$20 million to purchase critical elk habitat. The land purchased would be protected and for public use. Perhaps we could have someone explain the L&WCF and how we would be able access monies for DWC parcel purchase.