

Trout Stakeholder Team Meeting

March 3rd, 2018 – Stevens Point, WI

- I. Welcome, Introductions
 - a. Joanna Griffin – Statewide Trout Coordinator, Trout Team Leader
 - b. Bob Holsman – Meeting facilitator
 - c. Introduction of the stakeholders and participating DNR staff
 - i. There will be additional opportunities in the future for additional members of the public to comment on the draft trout management plan
 - ii. In attendance: Mike Aquino, Heath Benike, Bob Hasse, Justin Haglund, Matt Mitro, Paul Piszczek, Jonathan Pyatskowit, Craig Roberts, Dave Seibel, Shawn Sullivan, Joanna Griffin, Dave Boyarski, Bob Holsman, Rachel DePalma, Matt O'Brien, Laura MacFarland, Art Hansen, Sue Reinecke, Damian Wilmot, Jan Penn, Roger Roehl, Rodney Sempf, Tom Lager, Dean Cummings, Robert Korth, Dale Ebert, Jeff Siebers, Kent Johnson, Mark Andre, John Endrizzi, Roger Springman, Dennis Vanden Bloomen, Don Kauffman, Jack Saltes, Bob Martini, Topf Wells, Jim Wierzba, Gary Zimmer, Joshua Pyatskowit, Kelly Thiel, Tom Lukens, Heidi Oberstadt
- II. Direction of stakeholder groups – discussion
 - a. Vision Statements – broad goals for trout management plan based on feedback from breakout sessions last meeting
 - b. Inland lake trout and two-story lakes were not touched upon last time; focus was on brook, brown, and rainbow trout – question posed to stakeholder group regarding level of comfort in working through objectives on inland lake trout and lakes
 - i. Pennsylvania approach had a subset on inland lake trout issues; would be beneficial to incorporate this into the plan and gather a separate small group of stakeholders to discuss inland lake trout
 1. Very few inland lakes with lake trout in the state; lake trout aspect of plan would not detail lake-specific management strategies but rather a broader scope of management
 - ii. Steelhead, Coho, Chinook management will be covered by Lake Superior/Lake Michigan management plans
 - iii. Our plan should ensure that management policy in areas overlapping with neighboring states does not clash with other states' policy
 - c. Option 1: create objectives for the vision statements, then the Trout Team will draft a management plan for presentation next meeting
 - d. Option 2: Stakeholders will have more involvement in drafting the management plan, which will require many more meetings in coming weeks
 - e. Timeline:
 - i. Fall 2018/Winter 2019: Trout Management Plan would be presented to the NRB for approval

- f. General feel is more in favor on Option 1
- III. Draft Vision Statements (discussion notes):
 - a. Use the best biological, social and economic data to inform trout management decisions
 - i. The verb “Inform” seems a little too passive
 - ii. Term biological is too narrow; take into consideration geology and hydrology of streams and habitats
 - iii. No sense of data collection or research; generate, develop should be used in collaboration with use
 - iv. Expression of importance of protecting habitat should be prominently featured; wetland protection, climate change mitigation, etc; this should be higher up on the list; intention was that all statements were equally important
 - v. Work with academia to assess economic impact of fishing; this data can be communicated to public and legislature in pursuit of additional funding
 - b. Engage new and existing trout anglers and supporters through education, outreach and promotion, and promote public awareness, understanding and involvement with the trout program
 - i. Adding “of all ages: to acknowledge broad and varied outreach to encourage trout angling and participation by all age groups
 - c. Increase and maintain partnerships with the general public, agriculture, coops, angling groups and others
 - d. Provide trout angling opportunities that satisfy the diverse preferences and needs of our participants
 - i. Blend this into 5
 - e. Protect, restore and enhance sustainable cold-water aquatic habitats and trout populations
 - i. Main goal; other statements should feed into and support this one
 - ii. “wild and native” trout populations should be acknowledged; manage in a way that wild trout are a priority, less reliance on hatchery production of trout where possible
 - iii. Clarification of “habitat”; is it the trout stream itself, or the entire watershed? Encompassing point and non-point pollution control
 - iv. “Aquatic habitats” should potentially be replaced with “resources” or “ecosystems”
 - v. Cold-water resources have inherent value and importance as ecosystems beyond just as trout habitat; plan should include how these cold-water resources should be protected and preserved for all involved species and resources
 - f. Recruit, hire, retain, develop, and support a world-class fisheries staff and program
 - g. Stakeholder thoughts overall:
 - i. Statements 1 and 5 should be combined; consolidation with aforementioned wording changes

- ii. Aspirational goals should be centered around anglers, habitat, and trout; more concise, tighter phrasing and more specific in scope
- iii. People are the key; recruiting and retaining anglers should be emphasized, direct intervention to encourage angler involvement
- iv. Wording should be specific when discussing habitat; what is entailed in habitat, explicitly including the term watershed in describing habitat
- v. Staff experts identify funding shortages and recommend license fee increases to administration
- vi. Plan should include provision for advisory group recommending and assessing methods to obtain more funds for the trout program over the next ten years
- vii. Stakeholders are unhappy with how the DNR has been disempowered, funding has decreased and science has been disregarded by the current political climate; the plan should employ the most powerful words possible to reclaim some of that power and autonomy
- viii. Utilize DNR website in communication and outreach of the trout plan
- ix. Expand communication to include not only trout fishermen and consumers of the resource but also the general public; communicate economic importance of fishing, specifically trout fishing, in the state as a whole to inform the public to make more informed decisions regarding trout policy; emphasize the fact the support of the public is crucial to convincing legislature to increase economic support
- x. Analyze communication plan to the general non-fishing, non-hunting public; connect the importance of clean air, clean water, etc. to healthy resources
 - 1. Be aware of differences in communication between informed, fishing stakeholders and the non-fishing general public
- xi. Effort required at all levels for success
- xii. Vision statements should encompass how to create a stable, high-quality, sustainable trout fishery with opportunities for everyone
- xiii. Sustainability should be included as a priority; 10-year plan is a basis for future generations
- xiv. Increase awareness of importance of water quality and land use impacts on trout fishery health; management of water quality should appear prominently as a priority to the public
 - 1. Include these concepts and collaboration with water quality staff
- h. Vision statements are intended to be broad so that more specific goals can be developed in order to achieve these visions
 - i. Priorities needed to achieve broad goals will evolve and change over time and as objectives are achieved; priorities can shift over time and this awareness should be built into structure of plan
- i. Improvements:
 - i. Fewer and shorter statements
 - ii. Hierarchical organization

- iii. Stronger, more empowering language
- iv. Emphasis on importance of communication and building support in the public, both fishing and non-fishing
- v. Build in one overarching focal point for focus of plan; cold-water resource protection, trout habitat protection, etc.; vision statements then incorporated as management goals to achieve this overall goal

IV. Q&A with Trout Team

- a. What data gaps for science-based management exist that hinder DNR's ability to manage trout, or what data gaps do we anticipate encountering in the future?
 - i. Stocking and genetics; what types of fish we can stock and genetic strains available to us
 - ii. Whether or not there are genetic strains of brook trout that are resistant to gill lice
 - iii. Questions pertaining to trout movement and habitat use, particularly in the north; trout often seem to end up in places not typically considered trout habitat
 - 1. This will be examined in the near future with a fish tagging initiative; monetary and staff resources do present a challenge to conducting research in these areas
 - 2. These funding needs should be communicated to Trout Unlimited
 - iv. Trout response to changes in environmental conditions and what these changes are
 - v. Brook trout-brown trout interactions where they coexist
 - vi. Statewide angler/creel survey data; planned survey in Southeast to be conducted in spring at 9-10 popular trout fishing sites
 - vii. Suggestion to work with fishing guides to have them collect data when they can; log every fish caught in season (length, species, location)
 - viii. DNR should consider a statewide central network for evaluating climate change at key locations over time
 - ix. Need to collect more data on natural stream progression
 - x. Emphasis on importance of citizen science and citizen monitoring in Fisheries
 - xi. Interest in hearing from biologists on what techniques and strategies will be employed in the future in dealing with climate change and management options going forward in the wake of these changes; how does climate change affect our trout management strategies
 - xii. Question from stakeholder regarding whether any thought has been given to expansion of inland trout lakes in the state
 - 1. Some work is being done in the north to stock certain strains of lake trout in lakes to ensure that lake trout genetic integrity is retained (Trout Lake and Black Oak Lake)
 - 2. This would be further explored and addressed at future meetings

- V. Breakout Session: brainstorm outcomes, list and prioritize objectives (more detailed notes on these are located in a separate document).
 - a. Wild trout management (genetics, management units, stocking)
 - i. Beaver control to improve fish passage, allow for free trout movement and cold water for spawning areas
 - ii. Improve genetic strains for hardiness – gill lice resistance, warmer stream temperature tolerance
 - iii. Minimize rainbow trout
 - iv. Protect healthiest populations of each species where they exist
 - v. Carrying capacity studies
 - vi. Mimic quality natural habitat when doing restoration work
 - b. Two-story lakes/lake trout
 - i. Maintain proper regulation of Lake Trout
 - ii. Develop criteria for determining where inland lake trout should be stocked
 - iii. Stocking strategy that incorporates genetics
 - iv. Opportunities for angler catch reporting of inland lake trout
 - v. Research best management practices of inland lake trout if funding allows
 - c. Outreach, education, public involvement and partnerships
 - i. Broader base of support; expand non-anglers
 - ii. Recruit new anglers
 - iii. Work with all anglers, not just trout anglers
 - iv. Broaden value of resource
 - v. Increase fishing participation (more people)
 - vi. Lead public to be good stewards of the resource
 - vii. Create a culture of the DNR in our state
 - d. Habitat projects/improvements
 - i. Habitat restoration projects with emphasis on native plant communities
 - ii. Increase easements
 - iii. Non-game habitat should be incorporated in habitat restoration
 - iv. Ensure connectivity of streams, encourage fish passage
 - v. Prioritize one species of trout over another depending on individual stream characteristics and goals
 - vi. Beaver control and management
 - e. Angler opportunities
 - i. Add more stream easements
 - ii. Increase accessible areas
 - iii. Communicate with anglers to reduce confusion surrounding regulations
 - iv. Simplify trout regulations
 - v. Reassess current trout stream classification in regulations policy
 - vi. Add new trout populations where plausible
- VI. Stakeholder prioritization
 - a. Wild trout management

- i. Protect our best brook trout waters; keep them genetically pure, naturalize populations of browns/rainbows
 - ii. Protect dwindling brook trout populations and study possibilities
 - iii. Study the water quality and native populations to stay aware of threats to the system
 - b. Two-story lakes/lake trout
 - i. Evaluation of lake trout data and if there are any research needs for our inland lake trout populations
 - ii. Prioritizing existing lake trout populations
 - iii. Stocking strategy that incorporates genetics for both inland lake trout but also inland two-story fisheries in our lakes
 - c. Outreach, education, public involvement and partnerships
 - i. Build a broader base, more anglers
 - ii. Promote our fishing opportunities in and out of state
 - iii. Increase outreach to diverse partners, including youth
 - d. Habitat projects/improvements
 - i. Develop habitat restoration techniques that favor one species over the other depending on management priority for each water
 - ii. Try to obtain funding to double amount of stream restoration by 2030
 - iii. Target restoration on priority streams rather than shotgun approach
 - e. Angler opportunities
 - i. Vegetation and stream corridor work – making access a priority
 - ii. Quality trout in north (bigger than 8 inches)
 - iii. Promote angler opportunities (nonresidents and residents)
 - iv. Add more stream easements
 - v. Education/outreach on proper catch and release handling to reduce mortality
 - vi. Maintain water quality in trout populations
- VII. Future steps and recap
 - a. Stakeholders prefer the Trout Team to create an outline of the draft management plan for stakeholders to evaluate and comment on
 - i. This is to obtain feedback on the structure of the plan before a lot of staff time is spent writing the detailed plan
 - b. Trout Team will reach out to specific lake trout stakeholders.
 - c. Aim to have a finalized draft plan for internal review by the end of summer 2018 (this may be later since the final plan will actually go to the NRB in April 2019); potential in-person meeting to discuss draft plan in July, but stakeholders prefer to do work over email.
 - d. Notes from both this meeting and last meeting will be compiled within a week and sent out to stakeholders for review and feedback
 - i. Next step would be to revise vision statements with feedback and improvements suggested by stakeholders

- e. Outline of draft may be provided to stakeholders by email for individual comments and feedback, along with timeline for response
- f. Suggestion to have review of plan in sections, rather than asking stakeholders to go through a 100-page document
 - i. Include addendum in plan that the plan was developed in cooperation with stakeholders from all across the state with experience and expertise in various areas
 - ii. Conference calls with each region to further discuss regional management goals for the plan is an option
 - iii. Stakeholders could assist with facilitation of regional public meetings to ease burden on DNR staff
 - iv. Advisory groups have a lot of clout in the political sphere, can advocate for more funding and staff for DNR to accomplish its goals
- g. Ideal timeline
 - i. Summer 2018 – internal review on draft plan
 - ii. Fall/Winter 2018 – public meetings on draft plan
 - iii. April 2019 – NRB approval of final plan