

Minutes

SECOND MEETING OF THE RECONSTITUTED TECHNICAL ADVISORY
COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL
AREAS IN SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN

August 11, 2008

Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission
W239 N1812 Rockwood Drive
Waukesha, Wisconsin

Members Present

Dr. Susan E. Lewis, Chairperson

Professor of Biology,
Carroll College

Dr. Donald M. Reed, Secretary

Chief Biologist, SEWRPC

Fay U. Amerson

Urban Conservation Specialist,
Walworth County

Brian Russart
(representing Susan Black)

Natural Areas Coordinator
Milwaukee County Parks/UWEX

Dr. Owen Boyle

Regional Ecologist,
Wisconsin Department of Natural
Resources

Gerald H. Emmerich, Jr.

Member, Board of Directors,
Land Trust of Walworth County

Shawn Graff

Executive Director,
The Ozaukee Washington Land
Trust

Andrew A. Holschbach

Director, Planning, Resources, and
Land Management Department,
Ozaukee County

B. Martinus Johnson

Wildlife Manager, Wisconsin
Department of Natural Resources

Marlin P. Johnson	Associate Professor Emeritus, Field Station Manager, Department of Biological Sciences, University of Wisconsin Waukesha Center; Vice President, Waukesha County Land Conservancy
Mary Lichter	Parks Director, Kenosha County Parks
Stephen McCarthy	Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District
James P. Morrissey	Land/Facilities Supervisor, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Paul E. Mueller	Administrator, Land Use and Parks Department, Washington County
Dr. Patricia Nagai	Horticulture Educator, UW Extension Service, Racine County
Dr. Stephen L. Solheim	Associate Professor, Department of Biological Sciences, University of Wisconsin—Whitewater
Scott Thompson	Director of Freshwater Conservation, Wisconsin Chapter, The Nature Conservancy
Dr. Joy J. Wolf	Associate Professor, Department of Geography, University of Wisconsin—Parkside
<u>Guests</u>	
Ramsey Radakovich	Milwaukee County Parks
<u>SEWRPC Staff</u>	
Dr. Lawrence A. Leitner	Principal Biologist

The second meeting of the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission's reconstituted Technical Advisory Committee for the Protection and Management of Natural Areas in Southeastern Wisconsin was called to order by Dr. Susan E. Lewis, Chairman, at 10:04 a.m. Roll call was accomplished by circulating a sign-in sheet and a quorum was declared present.

Review and Approval of the Minutes of the Meeting of 30 June 2008

Dr. Lewis asked the Committee if there were any additions or corrections to the minutes of the meeting of June 30, 2008. Referring to page five of the minutes, Mr. Emmerich suggested that Dr. Solheim's addition begin "As the science of conservation . . ." and suggested moving the original first two sentences to the end. Additionally, Dr. Lewis noted that the first line at the top of page six should read ". . . vulnerable to biotic and abiotic edge effects . . ."

[Secretary's Note: The paragraph will be amended to read: "As the science of conservation biology has developed in the last several decades, there has been an increased understanding of the long-term dynamics of natural areas. Areas that are remnants of once much more extensive landscapes face two fundamental issues: First, their generally small size means relatively low populations of specialist ("faithful") organisms and, second, the remaining smaller interior habitat, which typically is less vulnerable to biotic and abiotic edge effects, can lead to serious degradation of protected areas over time. Many fundamentally intact remnants of natural habitats in southeastern Wisconsin have been recognized and offered protected status. However, for this protection to be effective over the long term consideration must be given to significantly expanding the network of protected areas."]

Mr. Emmerich made a motion, seconded by Dr. Solheim, to add a discussion of the long-term network of natural areas, buffer lands, and restoration areas as part of the primary environmental corridor system, and the need to manage these primary environmental corridors appropriately. While the primary environmental corridors may protect the natural areas, critical species habitat areas, and their buffers from development, there is no requirement that the primary environmental corridors be managed properly. This motion was passed unanimously by the Committee.

[Secretary's Note: The following will be added to the Amendment at the beginning of the last paragraph on p. 26: "To ensure that natural areas and critical species habitat areas, primary environmental corridors, and the network of plant and animal communities contained within them are maintained for the future, proper management is essential. Simply designating an area as one of the above entities, although essential, is not sufficient. Equally important is ensuring an appropriate management regime."]

Dr. Reed then pointed out the changes that had been made, at the request of the Committee, to Table 1 of Section 3, which listed the State Natural Areas within the Region. He also noted that the table, as suggested by Mr. Meyer, would be further amended to clearly show that those State Natural Areas not in public ownership are protected by conservation easements. Referring to the same Table 1, Mr. Graff added that the ownership of Kurtz Woods State Natural Area in Ozaukee County had been transferred from The Nature Conservancy to the Ozaukee Washington Land Trust. He also stated that Huiras Lake State Natural Area in Ozaukee County was partially owned by the Department of Natural Resources. Dr. Leitner replied that he was unsure if the Department ownership actually included any of the State Natural Area as delineated by the Commission. Mr. Graff and Dr. Leitner agreed to check on the ownership boundaries. Dr. Reed stated that Table 1 would be amended to show the most current ownership information.

[Secretary's Note: After reviewing the most recent maps indicating property boundaries, the Commission staff determined that the Department of Natural Resources does own a 20-acre parcel within the delineated Huiras Lake natural area, and that Table 1 would be corrected to reflect this. The revised Table 1 is attached hereto as Exhibit A.]

Referring to the third paragraph on page eight, Mr. Emmerich suggested that the second sentence be changed to read, "It should provide a mechanism to verify the extent to which the protection actually leads . . ." The Committee concurred with this change.

There being no further changes, on a motion by Mr. Holschbach, seconded by Mr. Graff, and carried unanimously, the minutes were approved as amended.

Dr. Reed stated that the text amendments just approved in the minutes would appear in the minutes of today's meeting.

Consideration of the Draft Amendment to SEWRPC Planning Report No. 42, A Natural Areas and Critical Species Habitat Protection and Management Plan for Southeastern Wisconsin, Sections 4-6

Dr. Reed noted that an outline of the Amendment had been provided to the Committee, and asked for the Committee's suggestions, especially whether Section 7, which deals with natural area-related laws and policies, should be placed before Section 5. After some discussion, Mr. Morrissey recommended that Section 7 be left in place, but that Sections 5 and 6 be switched, so that the original Section 5 would become Section 6, and that Section 6 would become Section 5. The consensus of the Committee was that this change was appropriate.

Dr. Boyle pointed out that Section 1 (F) of the outline should read "Scheme of Presentation." Dr. Reed stated that these changes and corrections would be made to the outline.

[Secretary's Note: The revised outline is attached as Exhibit B]

Section 4, Natural Areas and Critical Species Habitat Sites That Have Been Identified Since Original Plan Completion

Dr. Lewis asked that Dr. Reed review Sections 4-6 of the Amendment. He began a page-by-page review of Section 4, noting that Maps 12 and 13 were being prepared by the Commission's Geographic Information Systems Division, and would be available for the Committee to review at the next meeting. However, staff review maps are available for the Committee members to inspect if they so desired.

Dr. Reed then stated that a list of potential additional sites in Walworth County had been provided to the Commission staff by Mr. Emmerich and Ms. Amerson, and that they would be analyzed for possible inclusion in the Amendment. Mr. Marlin Johnson offered to provide a similar list for Waukesha County, as did Mr. Graff for Ozaukee and Washington counties.

Mr. Emmerich asked how the natural area and critical species sites would be numbered in the Amendment, pointing out that the system in the original Planning Report No. 42 was awkward and unwieldy, and at times confusing. Dr. Reed replied that this has been an ongoing problem, but that the Commission staff would endeavor to simplify the numbering system.

Several changes in the classification or description of natural areas were suggested by the Committee. Mr. Graff recommended that Abbott Gorge in Ozaukee County be changed from NA-3 to NA-2 because other regional ecologists had thought highly of the site (i.e., to be of countywide significance). Dr. Leitner agreed that, indeed, the site falls somewhere between NA-2 and NA-3 quality rankings, and further analysis was required. Dr. Boyle recommended that the term "sedge meadow" be added to the title or description of Adams Prairie in Milwaukee County. Dr. Reed thought that, in the interests of keeping names of sites as short as possible, adding a phrase to the description would be the better option. Dr. Wolf suggested changing Colonial Park Woods in Racine County from NA-3 to NA-2, since restoration efforts had improved the ecological quality of the site. Dr. Reed stated that due consideration would be given these and any other recommended changes. However, he also said that in situations like these, the opinion of the Bureau of Endangered Resources staff would be valuable. Mr. Morrissey offered to enlist the aid of Mr. Eric Epstein of the Department of Natural Resources, who had previously contributed his expertise to the original Planning Report No. 42.

Mr. Emmerich asked if the massasauga site on Turtle Lake in Walworth County was included within the Turtle Lake Fen natural area. Dr. Leitner replied that, yes, it was.

Referring to Table 10, Mr. Marlin Johnson noted that only critical plant species were listed, and asked whether there were no new critical animal species. Dr. Reed replied that new critical herptile species areas, such as for Butler's garter snake, will be included. Mr. Graff asked whether public utilities should be included as protective ownership agencies

in Tables 8 and 10. Dr. Reed replied that since these utilities offer only limited protection of the natural values of the sites in question, they have not been listed as under protective ownership. Mr. Marlin Johnson then asked about railway rights-of-way. Dr. Reed responded that this is a continuing question, since railways have in the past been uncooperative in properly maintaining natural areas, usually prairie remnants, within their rights-of way.

Mr. Johnson asked about the inclusion of new aquatic areas, to which Dr. Reed replied that additional information, such as that pertaining to mussel species, will be added, and that protective buffers along stream reaches fall under the corridor issue.

Mr. Emmerich discussed the section dealing with ‘New Sites’ on page 56. Mr. Holschbach noted that the West Bend Kames had been added as a new geological area, and asked if there were any other such additional areas. Mr. Graff added that he intends to hold discussions addressing just that question. Dr. Reed stated that any new information concerning significant geological areas would be appreciated and added as appropriate.

Mr. Emmerich suggested including a short paragraph, taken verbatim from Planning Report No. 42, documenting significant aquatic areas. Dr. Reed agreed to include such a passage.

[Secretary’s Note: The following passage, from page 356 of Planning Report No. 42, will be inserted in the Amendment: “ Using the Commission’s aquatic-area evaluation scheme, it was determined that the highest-quality streams in the Region in 1990 included the Mukwonago River, reaches of the Milwaukee River, the Bark River, Bluff Creek, Riveredge Creek, and the upper reaches of Cedar Creek. Of a total of about 1,209 perennial—stream-miles in the Region, about 103 stream-miles, or about 9 percent, were assigned an Aquatic Area rank of AQ-1, the highest; about 188 stream-miles, or about 16 percent, were assigned a rank of AQ-2; and about 446 stream-miles, or about 37 percent, were assigned a rank of AQ-3. The highest-quality lakes within the Region in 1990 included Beulah Lake, Lulu Lake, the Phantom Lakes, Pickerel Lake, Big Cedar Lake, Gilbert Lake, Nagawicka Lake, and Lowe’s Lake, and Long Lake and Mud Lake within the Cedarburg Bog State Natural Area. Within the Region in 1990 there was a total of 198 lakes generally 10 acres or more in water-surface area, having a combined water-surface area of about 38,495 acres. Of these lakes, lakes with a total water-surface area of about 3,723 acres, or about 10 percent of the total water-surface area involved, were assigned an Aquatic Area rank of AQ-1, the highest; lakes with a total water-surface area of about 20,965 acres, or about 54 percent of the total water-surface area involved, were assigned an Aquatic Area rank of AQ-2; and lakes with a total water-surface area of about 9,879 acres, or about 26 percent of the total water-surface area involved, were assigned an Aquatic Area rank of AQ-3.”]

Ms. Amerson explained that Walworth County often uses the aquatic resource maps for planning purposes. She asked whether they will be updated as well. Dr. Reed stated that those qualities listed in Planning Report No. 42 would still be relied on, noting that the Commission staff had reviewed them and thought that they were adequate, but that it would be prudent to have Mr. William Wawrzyn and Mr. Robert Wakeman of the Department of Natural Resources staff further examine them.

Mr. Marlin Johnson asked where ephemeral ponds fall as far as protection is concerned, and Dr. Wolf added that many of these are now being identified. Dr. Reed stated that those located in the primary environmental corridor are considered to be ADID wetlands. He then discussed the joint DNR/SEWRPC ephemeral pond mapping effort.

Ms. Amerson expressed concerns about primary and secondary environmental corridors and isolated natural resource areas, recommending that the Commission combine these areas together into one category. Dr. Reed replied that the specifics of corridor criteria was really outside the purview of the natural areas and critical species habitat study, and should more appropriately be dealt with in the Land Use Plan. Mr. Mueller added that the secondary corridors had become an issue in Washington County Smart Growth Plans, noting that the secondary corridors and isolated natural resource areas simply come across as not being as important as the primary corridors. Dr. Leitner remarked that, however, from an ecological perspective, primary corridors were more significant. Mr. Graff suggested that it would be a good idea to add primary environmental corridors to the maps showing locations of natural areas, to which Dr. Reed agreed.

Mr. Holschbach suggested adding the common names of organisms to Table 10, not just scientific names. Dr. Leitner stated that such names would be added to the table. Also referring to Table 10, Dr. Boyle noted that in a few instances, an 'R' designation had inadvertently been assigned to species classified as Special Concern. Dr. Leitner replied that this would be corrected.

Referring to Table 12, Mr. Graff noted that Gengler's Woods in Ozaukee County was now owned and managed by the Ozaukee Washington Land Trust, and that Highland Woods was owned by the City of Mequon. Dr. Leitner replied that these changes would be made.

Mr. Graff then moved to approve Section 4, as amended and subject to updates. This was seconded by Dr. Wolf and passed unanimously.

Section 5, Changes in the Status of Endangered, Threatened, and Special Concern Plant and Animal Species in the Region

Mr. Morrissey suggested that "new" species listed in Tables 14-17 could be made more noticeable, such as by shading. Dr. Reed replied that this would be done for the final version of the tables.

Dr. Nagai stated that it would be useful to include the web site addresses of the herbariums of the University of Wisconsin—Madison and the University of Wisconsin—Stevens Point, since these sites contain important information concerning the plant species that are found in Wisconsin. Dr. Reed agreed, stating that these references would be included. Dr. Boyle said that, since the list of critical species is updated periodically by the Bureau of Endangered Resources, the date of the latest update used for the Amendment should be indicated. Dr. Reed agreed to add this.

[Secretary's Note: The following web site addresses will be added: For the herbarium of the University of Wisconsin—Madison: www.botany.wisc.edu/herbarium and for the herbarium of the University of Wisconsin—Stevens Point: www.wisplants.uwsp.edu. The date of the most recent update to the State's critical species list—January 1, 2007—will be noted in the appropriate tables.]

Referring in the 'Notes' column in each of the tables 14-17, Dr. Solheim asked if there could be more consistency in the wording, such as "restricted north of the tension zone" for all such species.

[Secretary's Note: The Commission staff will try to make the notes as consistent as practicable. However, the geographic ranges of plant species are individualistic; accordingly, the description of their occurrences in the Region must be tailored for each species.]

Mr. Graff moved to approve Section 5, as amended and subject to updates. This was seconded by Ms. Amerson and passed unanimously.

Section 6, Changes to Natural Areas and Critical Species Habitat Sites Inventoried in SEWRPC Planning Report Number 42

Mr. Emmerich noted an error in Table 19, where the Lulu Lake Natural Area complex had been listed twice. Dr. Reed said that this would be corrected. Mr. Emmerich then noted that in Table 21, Muskego Lake Natural Area shows a very large increase in area—1965 acres, and asked why the Commission included all of Muskego Lake marsh in the Amendment. He further asked why it wasn't included in the original Planning Report No. 42. Dr. Reed explained that the lake and marsh were included because of habitat improvements made by the Department of Natural Resources; whereas previously, much of the lake had been open water, because of subsequent drawdown of lake levels there is now much more available wildlife habitat, such as for Forster's tern and black tern, listed as endangered and special concern species, respectively, by the Bureau of Endangered Resources. He added that this could be further discussed in the section dealing with changes following proper management. Mr. Morrissey suggested that a sentence or two could be added to the "Notes" column of Table 19, to which Dr. Reed concurred.

[Secretary's Note: The following will be added to the "Notes" column pertaining to Muskego Lake natural area in Table 21: "Recent planned drawdowns of lake

levels have added extensive deep and shallow marsh habitat to what had previously been open water.”]

Referring to Table 22, Mr. B. Martinus Johnson asked what had happened to reduce the Critical Species Habitat area of Brighton-Dale Woods in Kenosha County. Dr. Leitner replied that this was due to park improvements, such as for increased recreational development. Referring to the same Table 22, Mr. Graff noted a 9-acre loss of Critical Species Habitat area at the Sauk Creek Nature Preserve in Ozaukee County. Dr. Leitner replied that he would check on this to try to determine the reason.

[Secretary’s Note: After reviewing the natural area files, the Commission staff determined that the reason for the 9-acre difference in the acreage of Sauk Creek Nature Preserve critical species habitat area is that, in the original Planning Report No. 42, the area of the entire preserve—22 acres—was listed; for the Amendment, in the interest of accuracy, only the acreage of suitable woodland habitat for the critical species in question—forked aster (*Aster furcatus*)—is listed]

Dr. Boyle recommended that for clarity, the names used for State Natural Areas in Table 1 should be consistent with the names of Natural Areas in Table 19.

[Secretary’s Note: The SEWRPC staff will try to make the names of natural areas as consistent as possible throughout the report. However, the natural areas listed in Planning Report No. 42 and the Amendment are not always exactly the same areas as the defined State Natural Areas. For example, Bluff Creek Fens and Bluff Creek Woods have been combined officially into one State Natural Area, as indicated in Table 1, but are listed separately in the SEWRPC report because they are two entirely separate community and landscape types, and have been evaluated individually. Also Lulu Lake State Natural Area, as indicated in Table 1, is referred to as Lulu Lake and Eagle Spring Lake Wetland Complex and Adjacent Uplands State Natural Area in Planning Report No. 42 because it encompasses much more acreage, and more habitats, than the SNA. Another example is Jackson Marsh Wildlife Area State Natural Area in Washington County. Planning Report No. 42 refers to this area as Jackson Swamp Natural Area, because there is no marsh, only wooded swamp, within the boundaries, and to designate it otherwise would be ecologically misleading.]

Dr. Boyle also suggested that the total percent change of all natural areas should be included in the discussion. Dr. Reed stated that the Commission staff would provide such a statistic after analysis of the data.

[Secretary’s Note: The total change in area of all identified natural areas and critical species habitat areas is from 71,767 acres to 81,484 acres, an increase of 13.5 percent. This statistic will be included in Chapter 8, “Summary,” as an update to the original plan.]

Dr. Reed further added that a general discussion would be included in the text as to why we see differences in sizes from the original plan, in addition to actual boundary adjustments, such as GIS accuracy and differences in aerial photography techniques.

[Secretary's Note: The following passage, provided by Mr. John McDougall, Chief of the GIS division, will be added: "The original delineations of natural areas were made on aerial photographic prints acquired in 1990. These hardcopy images are not true maps and contain some horizontal displacement caused by ground relief. The natural area boundaries were subsequently digitized and quantified using the Commission's geographic information system (GIS) computer software. In 1995 and more recently the Commission has acquired aerial orthophotography, which is aerial photography that is enhanced by the removal of horizontal displacement caused by ground relief, thereby creating image products that can be used as true maps. The original natural area boundaries have recently been reviewed and adjusted to fit the more accurate orthophotography. Measurements of the acreages of the revised natural areas using GIS software will naturally differ from the original acreages due to the more accurate placement of the boundaries of these features on current orthophotography."]

Ms. Amerson suggested that the report be made more "user-friendly," such as by placing the title of tables at the top of each page of multi-paged tables, thus making it easier to keep track of the substance of the table. She also recommended keeping map site identification numbers the same for all maps and tables, as the situation in Planning Report No. 42 was very confusing. Dr. Reed replied that he would consult with Nancy Anderson, Chief of the Community Assistance division, who coordinates the Commission's style guide, to attempt to address those issues.

Mr. Emmerich added that one of the members of the board of directors of the Land Trust of Walworth County noted that several pages of maps and tables occur between the start and end of a sentence in the text, inappropriately interrupting the thought process. Dr. Reed responded that the Commission staff would try to address this problem.

[Secretary's Note: According to the Mr. Donald Simon of the Commission's Cartographic Division, the policy in the past has been, where necessary, to place "continued on page ____" at the bottom of the page where the text is interrupted, and "continued from page ____" on the page where the text resumes, and this could be done for the Amendment.]

Mr. Graff then moved to approve Section 6, as amended and subject to updates. This was seconded by Dr. Wolf and passed unanimously.

Determination of Next Meeting Date

The next meeting date was scheduled for 2:00 p.m. on Tuesday, October 7, 2008, at SEWRPC in Waukesha. That meeting will cover Sections 7 and 8 of the Amendment.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:50 a.m. on a motion by Mr. Emmerich, seconded by Mr. Mueller, and carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Donald M. Reed, Secretary