

Moose Advisory Committee (MAC)

Meeting NOTES

April 22, 2009 ~~~ 10:00 A.M. – 3:00 P.M.
Natural Resources Research Institute (NRRI) ~~~ Duluth, MN

Biological Dimensions Subcommittee

- None of these thresholds will be triggered for 3-5 years, most likely...is that acceptable to the MAC?
- Open to modifications based on new information (should emphasize this)
- Are we tiptoeing on this? Given the uncertainty, should we use precautionary principle and end hunting until there is more information?
- Biological subcom was approaching recommendations from biological trigger standpoint, assuming that Social subcom would make social trigger recommendations
- Are some of these thresholds too low?
- Change number 3 to set higher thresholds?
- If it's 15 years from now, and the thresholds have not been met, and there are 2000 animals left, harvest would have been ended already for social reasons anyway.
- Non-hunting public will react negatively to thresholds based on hunting attitudes
- Recommendations are a package deal, and DNR will have to consider all pieces
- Specify hunters as Minnesota hunters
- Looking at success rate, when does this become a once-in-a-lifetime hunt?
- If DNR bases decision whether or not to harvest based on hunting, DNR will have to answer some difficult and critical questions
- Social subcom should add a recommendation: "Social concerns may override biological thresholds or any kind"
- This is about biological dimensions, and perhaps hunter success as one social dimension
- May be disingenuous to close hunting now based on "precautionary principle". Bull/cow ratio is precautionary principle
- Should #3-4 be moved to social dimensions?
 - o More appropriate in biological dimensions
- **Final report should not have any sections – all recommendations together**

ACTIONS

- o Recommendations open to modification
- o Success rates for state hunters only
- o Addendum – suggest on previous success rates on when closure might occur
- o Subcommittee will edit and post to Basecamp for review by entire MAC previous to May meeting

Deer Management Subcommittee

- Split section up into Deer Management and Deer-Moose interactions

- Deer feeding ban is not justified anywhere in supporting text
- More supporting background text for #2-4
- Instead of #3-4, should we say “Re-evaluate deer management strategies in the moose range”?
- DNR in moose range is already managing for less than 10 deer per acre
- #1 is universal...incorporate #3 into #1?
- Real key is #1, how we get there is less important than getting there
- Incorporate #3 and 4 into #1
- No mention of deer management in NW Minnesota
- No mention of impacts of listing moose as special concern and impacts on deer management
- Text should address NW deer management
- NE Deer goal setting meeting – local hunters agreed to 50% reduction in goals
- Folks in Lake and Cook Counties would like many fewer deers

ACTIONS

- o Add language for NW deer population
- o #1 is universal – incorporate #3-4 into #1
- o #2 stand alone but add supporting text
- o #5 stand alone
- o Subcommittee will edit and post to Basecamp for review by entire MAC previous to May meeting

Incorporating Climate Change in Recommendations

- There is consensus in MAC that climate change is a potential threat to existence of moose in MN
- Impact of CC on deer population relevant to include? Unclear impacts of CC on deer
- CC is uncertain; based on timeline, MAC approach may change. Short timeline may translate to less emphasis on CC
- DNR has not yet managed deer in northern MN for 20-25 years without a severe winter to recalibrate population
- If CC was off the table, it wouldn’t significantly change any of the recommendations
- Should CC be addressed in preamble and not in each subcom? General statement of importance...
- We should be careful not to push any agenda

ACTIONS

- o Subcommittees will determine whether CC is appropriate to address in their section, and we will discuss in May

Social Dimensions of Moose Subcommittee

- We should address predation (wolves) and moose somewhere in report (public perception)
- DNR has no control over #5...should it be included?
- Encourage legislature to work closely with DNR

- Wouldn't hurt to include #5 as a message, even though DNR can't act on it
- Add counties, Forest Resources Council, etc. as examples of stakeholders DNR needs to work with
- Should we add messages targeted at non-hunting stakeholders?
- Make more explicit the DNR should anticipate and address social outcry

ACTIONS

- o Subcommittee will edit and post to Basecamp for review by entire MAC previous to May meeting

COMMUNICATIONS

- o We're not creating the message; message is already out there that moose are first victims of CC, and that they're destined to decline
- o All the complexity of moose decline will make perception of direness of situation even greater than CC alone (more threats than just CC)
- o Should MAC be optimistic in its approach? In report, we should make clear we're looking at both sides of the coin (positive and negative)...we'll go where the information leads
- o Could mention optimistic story – CT moose moving south

Habitat Subcommittee

- Should we include summary paragraphs? Are they redundant, given the bulleted recommendations?
- Wordsmith summary to remove some redundancy
- Fuel reduction should be added as a factor
- Instead of naming specific factors, should the statement be more general and list examples?
- Would like to see first bullet of 4/21 version included (intra- and interagency/organizational coordination and planning)
- 3rd bullet of 4/21 document should be included in overarching comments (intro) as what we would ideally like to see
- Avoid charged issues in this document, let the discussions happen when developing BMP's
 - o Keep all bullets, but soften language?
- Reserve areas could help identify whether habitat quality is having an impact, given current adequacy of quantity
- Strike language re: "cold cover", given no evidence of low critical temperature
- Anecdotal observation of moose seeking cover from cold (basking in winter sun, disappear on cold windy days)
- Certain conifer species are preferred by moose, given lack of deciduous browse

ACTION

- o Alan and Jeff will work to make recommendation language more general, with specific examples listed

- Subcommittee will edit and post to Basecamp for review by entire MAC previous to May meeting

Research Subcommittee

- Specifying the continued population tracking is important, given the budget situation...everything is on the table
- Nothing specified for NW Minnesota
- Problems w/ NW research
 - Usually wait until after NE work to do NW, and usually there is not the snow cover
 - Difficult to risk human lives w/ aerial survey when moose population is so low
- State that NW survey should continue once reasonable evidence exists?
- Moose website for people to report when and where they see moose
- DNR looks for alternative, cheaper methods to determine population (pellet counts, etc.)
 - With a very small population, precision is sorely lacking
 - Could be a measure not of population, but of presence confirmation
- Volunteer recorders (like bird counts, wolf counts, etc.) in organized way – low cost
- State that this is not an exhaustive list, there are other possibilities
- Assure accuracy of website (www.mndnr.gov/moose)

ACTIONS

- Subcommittee will edit and post to Basecamp for review by entire MAC previous to May meeting

Review Next Steps

How will MAC address species listing status issue?

- Is it negligent of us to not say anything, given the status review is occurring and we know about moose?
- Suggestion: MAC isn't ready to recommend change of status, but DNR should plan to revisit moose listing 3-5 years from now
- Would listing hurt moose more than help?
 - Lose research with lack of hunted animals
 - Bothers local folks
- Powerful statement for MAC to support continued hunting while supporting status of “special concern”
 - MAC wouldn't have been assembled if there wasn't special concern, and DNR will have a hard time making argument there is NOT special concern
- MAC supporting hunting AND “special concern” may seem contradictory
- Could suggest that DNR give MAC's recommendations a chance to work, then revisit listing in 3 years
- There are positive effects of listing – increased access to funding

- Get information from Rich Baker – pointed set of questions for his criteria for how to trigger

ACTIONS

- o Someone will draft a list of specific questions for Rich to answer
Communications and Website

Consensus Approach

- o Appendix of dissents? Can be awkward
- o In intro, group can state that this document was agreed to by a majority of the group
- o Strive for consensus on certain issues (climate change, state listing status, others?)
- o DNR employees should recuse themselves of voting on final document

Close