

**Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
Commissioner's Advisory Committee on Natural Heritage (CAC)**

Committee Charter

Approved November 2014

<p>Purpose and Scope</p>	<p>To advise and be advocates for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' efforts to sustain the state's natural heritage and biological diversity. The Committee is intended to be a citizen voice for protection of high quality natural resources and an advisor leading to more integrated and effective work towards that end.</p> <p>Specifically, the Committee advises the department's Division of Ecological and Water Resources (EWR) on topics/issues related to the following EWR units/programs: scientific and natural areas (SNAs), prairie stewardship, nongame wildlife, Minnesota biological survey, rare species protection, terrestrial invasive species, forest and wetland monitoring, and State Wildlife Action Plan. For purposes of this Committee and charter, these programs (above) are collectively referred to EWR's natural heritage-related programs. These programs are administered by different organizational parts of EWR and are only a portion of the EWR's scope and mission which emphasize healthy watersheds.</p> <p>Desired outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent recommendations for sustaining the state's natural heritage and biological diversity, including targeted review of programs, policies, activities, operations, outreach, marketing, funding, and related legislation; • Advocacy for programs and actions that aim to sustain the state's natural heritage and biological diversity, and assistance in promoting these efforts; • Identification and pursuit of opportunities through partnerships to increase the protection of high quality natural resources; and • Shared understanding among Committee members of issues related to the state's natural heritage and biological diversity, as well as the impacts of terrestrial invasive species upon them. <p>Resulting from :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust among participants in the Committee process • Collaborative relationship between the Committee and the DNR • Effective exploration of targeted natural heritage-related issues • Effective administration and management of the Committee
<p>Audience and Affected Staff</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DNR commissioners and senior managers (particularly the EWR Division Director), through position statements, letters, and reports via EWR staff to senior management; • All DNR employees who participate in the natural heritage-related work, their supervisors, and the management chain of responsibility above them, through the program supervisors and coordinators who participate in the Committee; • The Minnesota legislature, through communications by members of the Committee; and • Organizations and individuals whose actions influence the state's natural heritage and biological diversity.
<p>Authorization</p>	<p>This Committee was initiated in 1966 to advise on establishment of the SNA Program. Its scope has gradually expanded over the years, with this formalization of expanded scope in 2014. The Committee is authorized by the DNR Commissioner and the Ecological and Water Resources Director. This Committee is ongoing.</p>

Membership	<p>15 citizen members, drawn from a pool of applicants, in consideration of recommendations by the Committee and DNR Ecological and Water Resources Staff, and selected by the DNR Commissioner. Citizen members must be residents of Minnesota (except that the previously appointed resident of Wisconsin may complete his current term) and may not be current employees of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. Members are preferred who have knowledge, demonstrated dedication to and/or experience related to natural area systems, conservation biology, ecology, environmental education, natural resource management, or protection of Minnesota's rare species, natural communities, geology, and other components of natural diversity. People are encouraged to apply for membership who are from conservation organizations, government agencies, local elected officials, research institutions, tribes, and business.</p> <p>In addition, non-voting EWR staff from affected programs provide information to the Committee and participate in its meetings.</p> <p>Applications for citizen member appointments will be publicly solicited in the fall of each year with new members' terms starting in January of the following year; appointments may start sooner to fill expired vacancies. Members serve 5 year terms, except when a member resigns the remainder of that vacant term will be filled, usually during the next open appointment process. Thus, every year, three new 5 year term members will be appointed, plus other new members would be appointed to lesser year terms to fill the remainder of any vacant member positions. Member appointment letters will specify the beginning and end dates of the term; DNR will keep track of member appointment terms.</p>
Meeting Schedule	<p>The Committee will conduct five to six formal Committee meetings per year; meeting on the first Wednesday of every other month (February, April, June, August, October, December). The Committee may hold additional informal meetings to gather information. The Committee may also conduct field trips in lieu of or in addition to regular meetings.</p> <p>Meetings will typically be four hours and may possibly be six hours in length; field trips may be longer.</p> <p>Generally, meetings will be held in St Paul at the DNR Central Office (500 Lafayette Road). With the concurrence of the officers, meetings may be held in other locations or other parts of the state and may be combined with a field trip.</p> <p>Regular Committee meeting agendas will typically include: approval of past meeting notes, Committee business, EWR program updates, and a focus topic. The focus topic will be typically addressed through a briefing on background information (some of which may be also sent to the Committee prior to the meeting), opportunity for questions and answers, followed by Committee discussion and recommendations.</p>
Major Milestones	<p><u>The Committee will work to accomplish the following outcomes each year:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ The Committee will review and make recommendations on selected key initiatives, plans, policies, and actions of EWR's natural heritage-related programs, in particular serving as a sounding board for proposed new directions or actions before they are launched; ★ The Committee will review, make recommendations, and where appropriate advocate for natural heritage-related legislation that is pending and key budget proposals for EWR's natural heritage-related programs; and ★ The Committee will advise on marketing efforts and assist in communicating and promoting EWR natural heritage-related programs to the Commissioner's Office and outside audiences.

Roles and Responsibilities

Committee members will discuss and develop recommendations on topics related to the scope of the Committee. Members are expected to attend regular meetings, or to advise of their absence.

The Committee, under the direction of the Chair, will apply Robert's Rules of Order for decision-making (i.e., an orderly process to identify items for decision, and an orderly voting process), with a simple majority necessary to approve a motion for committee action. The default process for committee exploration of non-voting issues is standard chair-directed discussion, supplemented with EWR staff facilitation, in support of good discourse. With approval of the majority of current members, votes may be taken at a meeting or electronically.

Members may only make statements on behalf of the Committee when so authorized by Committee action or at the direction of the Committee Chair. Individual members reserve the right when not identifying themselves as speaking for the Committee to communicate to anyone on topics addressed in the Committee.

Committee officers will consist of a Chair and Vice-Chair/Chair Elect. Each office is a one year term, and since the Vice Chair is also the Chair Elect, the total commitment to leadership positions is for two years. Nominations for the Vice Chair will be made at the December Committee meeting and elections will be held at the February meeting. A Nominating Sub-Committee (consisting of the current Chair, Vice-Chair, and the DNR staff lead for the Committee) may bring forth names of candidates for the Vice-Chair elect at the December meeting.

Duties of the Committee Chair

- 1) Conduct the meetings of the Committee
- 2) Set the agenda of the meetings in consultation with assigned EWR staff
- 3) Along with the Vice Chair, consult with EWR staff on issues where Committee input or action is needed between meetings
- 4) Represent the Committee in interactions with DNR leadership
- 5) Author and sign official communications from the Committee
- 6) Call special meetings or conference calls as needed between regularly scheduled meetings
- 7) Serve on the Committee nominating sub-committee
- 8) Represent the Committee to outside entities as needed (including the legislature)

Duties of the Committee Vice Chair

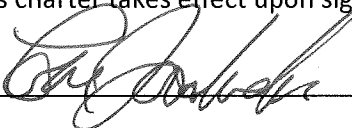
- 1) Perform the duties of the Chair in the absence of the Chair
- 2) Serve as Chair-elect to learn the duties of Chair
- 3) Chair the Committee nominating sub-committee

DNR will provide support and facilitation, with a specific EWR staff person assigned to be the DNR staff lead for the Committee and a person to take meeting notes. The DNR Commissioner's Office, EWR Managers, Program Supervisors and Coordinators or their designees will participate in the Committee as needed to update the Committee and to provide perspective and expertise to enhance Committee discussions and decisions. They will not be voting members when the committee develops its recommendations.

Meeting scheduling, distribution of meeting materials, and facilitation are the responsibility of assigned EWR staff. Meeting notes will be taken, written and distributed by EWR staff, and reviewed by the Committee at the next meeting. Meeting notes reflect ideas and perspectives shared at the meeting in discussion and are not an endorsement of ideas and perspectives recorded. Actions taken by the Committee will be recorded. Meeting materials and supporting documents will be emailed to Committee members. Currently, the SNA Program Supervisor is assigned as the EWR staff lead for the Committee.

Ground Rules	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Meetings will start and end on time. 2) While not subject to the open meeting law, the Committee meetings will be open to observers; the Chair may invite observers to participate in discussion. 3) The Committee will comply with any DNR policies on advisory committees. 4) If the Committee cannot resolve issues, recommendations will be forwarded to the EWR division director or the assistant commissioner overseeing the division. 5) Members will avoid sending substitutes to meetings; when a substitute is necessary, the member will advise the Chair in advance. 6) Members will not revisit decisions made in their absence. 7) The Chair will be clear about what decisions or recommendations are needed. 8) Decision items and recommendations will be clearly articulated in meeting documentation. 9) Members will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be courteous and respectful, • understand DNR's authority and responsibilities, and • participate effectively in discussions and decisions.
Communication	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Show up and be present; not only represent your own opinions and experience, but also reflect other stakeholder perspectives. 2) Listen for understanding; focus on problem solving. 3) One conversation at a time; stay engaged; avoid sidebar conversations. 4) Balance participation; try not to speak a second time until others have been heard. 5) Challenge assumptions – your own and others. 6) Use questions that focus on clarifying and exploring. 7) Expect to learn from differences and conflict; seek creative solutions. 8) Keep it positive – be constructive, affirm others, keep an open mind. 9) Disagree respectfully; provide alternatives. 10) Minimize dispute and misunderstanding which can happen by over-reliance on e-mail messaging; switch to the phone or a personal visit when communications get stuck.
Resources	Lunch during meetings straddling the noon hour for members and other approved participants. Mileage reimbursement for members.
Committee Approval	Committee approval via email vote concluding November 3, 2014
Revisions	This charter sunsets in November 2019 (5 years from signature date) and may be revised or renewed through a review and approval process.

This charter takes effect upon signature.



Date: 11/04/14

Tom Landwehr, Commissioner