

NOTES

Wildlife Committee Meeting

August 16, 2024

(Assignments are in red.)

Attendees:

Joy O'Keefe
Mike Eichholz
Liza Lehrer
Gary Glowacki
Chris Jacques
Scott Meister
Melissa Custic
Lydia Scott (notes)

Joy welcomed the Committee members.

Joy walked the Committee through the sections of the nutria document.

1. What are the characteristics that make nutria invasive? Committee members reported that it is a generalist, very adaptable, has high reproductive capacity, consumes large quantities of food,
2. Is the Committee recommended that passive monitoring was an appropriate recommendation for nutria at this time. **Chris is going to provide the link on state regulations related to introducing foreign species.**
 - a. The Committee recommended that there be something put in the State hunters survey advising hunters to watch out for nutria. There was a question as to whether there was a similar survey for anglers. **Chris will check on this.**
Link to public survey: <https://wildlifeillinois.org/report-sightings/report-unusual-animal-sightings/>
The Committee suggested language in the paper that would recommend increased funding for monitoring in the event there were increased sightings through passive surveys, as described above.
3. The Committee discussed damage potential and determined there is high potential for nutria to be destructive in Illinois.
4. The economic impacts from nutria are included in several of the criteria and could be particularly problematic for rice production. Rice production has expanded in

southern Illinois. A question about the impacts of nutria to beaver was brought up. Mike has read a paper on this stating there is little to no impact on beaver. He will add it to the literature. Chris stated the state is concerned about establishment of nutria. This category is scoring a 3 on the scale.

5. Environmental impacts could be significant. This category is scoring a 3 on the scale.
6. The overall nutria score is 12 which is a medium score. The Committee agreed that this was a correct score and it appears to be consistent with IDNR's assessment.
7. There needs to be some additional work in the recommendations section. Of particular concern is climate change and how nutria might react – meaning Illinois could be a more hospitable site in the future.
8. Joy asked committee members add additional literature to the literature folder. Mike stated he had some additional literature and would add it in.
9. It was requested that Lydia put the links to the paper and folder in the notes for future reference.

[Nutria Folder](#)

<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/1/folders/1ldP3DN9-hhDkHrziJsETj8YdsbwLOM9O>

[Pest, Nutria Paper](#)

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1rNZGfykcv_kMZVUb3JLVzGLQjNzlu4eH/edit

10. Joy will get the paper out to the Committee on Monday. Committee members were asked to review the paper and add any additional information by Friday of next week. Joy will send the paper to the Council the following week.
11. Joy reminded the Committee that Mike is stepping down as a co-chair and from the committee and asked if anyone was willing to step into that spot. Mike will also work to find a replacement for himself on the Committee.
12. Joy asked if the Committee had a recommendation for the next species. Mike suggested feral cats – although this is a controversial topic. It was recommended that expanded awareness of the problem could be a good approach. Urban and rural problems are very different. Joy will talk with Dr. Wald, who presented at the Council's meeting last December, if she would be willing to talk with the Committee. Some concern about the negative public image associated with listing feral cats as invasive. Liza says the topic has become less controversial in Chicago and provided a link to the documentary Cat City: <https://www.cat-city.org/>. Melissa noted that the invasive plant committee has been grappling with a similar issue – listing callery pear, though it is a popular ornamental.
13. Joy will contact Committee members next week to give out homework assignments. Each Committee member could pick a state and dig into outreach, policies, or

programs around rural or urban cats. E.g. the DC Cat Count may have additional information to share. Chris will check the pulse of IDNR with respect to any policy shifts on feral cats.

14. It was discussed that an NGO and land managers would be good to get involved in the Committee. It was suggested that perhaps The Nature Conservancy would be willing to help. Randy Smith was recommended as a potential new member; Mike said he would ask him.
15. The next meeting will be on September 20th.