

WILDLIFE COMMITTEE

September 20, 2024

1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

NOTES

Attendees:

Joy O'Keefe
Michael Eicholtz
Scott Meister
Chris Jacques
Melissa Cusic

Guest: Dr. Dara Wald

Joy welcomed everyone and introduced Dr. Wald.

Dr. Wald told the Committee that it is important to know what the goal is, so you know how to approach the problem. For instance, is the goal to change behavior or raise awareness?

Ultimately Dr. Wald told the Committee that for any effort to be successful it will be critical to engage the various audiences (e.g. trap, neuter and release groups, cat owners, bird people, etc.) and “listen” to them rather than try to change their opinion. A common goal will be needed.

Dr. Wald does not know of any states that have designated outdoor cats as invasive.

When asked if policy changes have had impacts, Dr. Wald cited rabies as an effective policy. It has been effective and supported by the public. Policies that focus on the “owner” seem to be more effective, e.g. getting the owner to take responsibility for the animal. A policy in Florida states that anyone owning an outdoor cat is responsible for controlling their movements. Another policy that might have some impact would be the Migratory Bird Act.

Dr. Wald also talked about a policy in Hawaii to build a coalition regarding outdoor cats. This policy was ultimately thwarted at the state level due to politics.

Dr. Wald will do a bit of research on Florida and Hawaii and get back to Joy.

It was suggested that the Committee dive into policies about outdoor cats or policies that could be related to the outdoor cat situation.

A question came up as to what determines ownership. If a cat is a member of “your colony” and you feed it does that mean “you” own it?

Euthanasia is contentious. DNR has historically managed problem species by removing them.

There is a gap between those who support lethal management and those focused on non-lethal management.

Dr. Wald suggested that the Committee focus on:

1. What action will be needed for what goal?
2. What is the outcome the Committee wants to see?
3. Understand that there is no ideal solution.
4. What is reasonable?
5. What is realistic?
6. What can be accomplished in a reasonable amount of time?
7. What is a reasonable cost to resolve this situation?

To have a positive outcome there will need to be a long process.

This discussion will continue at the October meeting.

Joy walked the Committee through the nutria document. Chris Jacques will be speaking to the Division Chief after this meeting and will find out how the List of Injurious Animals was developed and what criteria are required to be put on the list.

(<https://dnr.illinois.gov/content/dam/soi/en/web/dnr/adrules/documents/17-805.pdf>)

Joy walked through some questions and recommended language for the document and will get it ready to go to the Council this next week.

The next discussion was about adding some additional members to the Committee. Several wildlife veterinarians have been discussed and most have declined to participate in the Committee. Mike will talk to Randy Smith and if he is not interested perhaps someone named Theron will be willing to help. Joy would like to see someone from another state agency participate. Chris will ask for recommendations of others who can participate.

Chris has volunteered to be the Committee co-chair.

The next meeting will be Oct. 18th. Joy will be on the road so will take the meeting from her car.