

## FOREST MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (FMAC) MEETING

March 9, 2011, 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

### Minutes

#### **FMAC MEMBERS PRESENT**

Mr. Bill Botti (Chair), Michigan Forest Association  
Ms. Lynne M. Boyd, Forest Management Division, DNRE  
Mr. William Manson Jr., Michigan Snowmobile Association  
Mr. Marvin Roberson, Sierra Club  
Mr. Stephen Shine, Department of Agriculture  
Mr. Desmond Jones, Michigan Tree Farm  
Dr. Donna LaCourt, Michigan Employment Development Corporation (via conference call)  
Dr. Daniel Keathley, Michigan State University  
Mr. Gary Melow, Michigan Biomass  
Mr. Warren Suchovsky, Suchovsky Logging  
Ms. Amy Trotter, Michigan United Conservation Clubs  
Ms. Kim Korbecki (Assistant), Forest Management Division, Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DNRE)

#### **FMAC ADVISORS PRESENT**

Mr. Barry Paulson, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Huron-Manistee (via conference Call)

#### **PUBLIC ATTENDEES / GUESTS**

Mr. Brent Rudolph, Wildlife Division, DNRE  
Ms. Lauri Kay Elbing, The Nature Conservancy  
Ms. Karen Middendorp, Michigan Snowmobile Association

#### **I. Welcome – Chair Botti**

**Chair Botti** called the March 9, 2011 meeting of the Forest Management Advisory Committee to order at 1:03 p.m. He welcomed all in attendance, including those from the public and on conference call, and then asked everyone to introduce themselves.

#### **II. Action Items**

##### **Adoption of the March 9, 2011 FMAC Meeting Agenda**

**Chair Botti** asked the FMAC if there were additions or corrections to the agenda; there were none. The March 9, 2011 FMAC meeting agenda was adopted as presented.

##### **Adoption of the January 13, 2011 FMAC Meeting Minutes**

**Chair Botti** asked if there were comments or edits; **Ms. Boyd** stated she had a follow-up to report on an item from the January 13 FMAC meeting. Per the seven-day rule of the FMAC Bylaws, the January 13 FMAC Meeting Minutes was adopted as presented.

#### **III. Public Comment**

There was none.

#### **IV. Deer Numbers (Problems Caused and Money Lost) – Brent Rudolph, Wildlife Division**

**Chair Botti** introduced Mr. Rudolph, stating he had attended the FMAC meeting to provide a brief overview of deer management and impacts, with particular interest in how deer fit into the FMAC's process. A copy of the PowerPoint will be provided to Ms. Korbecki for availability.

**Mr. Rudolph** began by providing the following information:

- 1) The process used to develop proposed deer population goals from 2006-2010, started in 2005. Wildlife (WLD) tries to operate broader than just looking at the number of deer. To a forest manager, the number of deer is not as important as how the deer affects the forest. Wildlife does still work with the number of deer on the ground. In 1999, deer management goals were developed and summarized in documents at the management unit level. In the early 2000s, WLD looked at revising these goals internally. The Habitat Biologists and Field Biologists were asked to review historic and on-the-ground evidence. Information was circulated on how deer can affect plants and different communities, for comments. Public meetings (open to everyone) were held from mid-December to early February, 2005-2006. An optional brief survey was conducted. Some of the issues and primary concerns was the difference in deer population estimates and opposition to reducing deer anywhere in the state. In 1994, the NRC adopted a WLD policy which operated on using management practices based on scientific research. Wildlife still operates this way.
- 2) In 2010, a strategic deer management plan was adopted and approved, which is the first time ever adopted. The plan is available at [www.michigan.gov/deer](http://www.michigan.gov/deer). It includes current regulations, the deer management plan, and background on how the plan was developed, just to name a few. A statewide deer advisory team provided a lot of the information, which was a big part of the process. That report is also available on the web. The purpose was to provide strategic guidance to DNRE staff and stakeholders. The plan commits to managing deer at an appropriate scale; investigates and implements methods to assess and incorporate; considers impacts of deer on other species, communities and ecosystems; and considers all these things when setting population goals.
- 3) The Nuts and Bolts of How Annual Reviews go:  
There is a tool used to track data. This was reviewed with the statewide deer advisory team. WLD showed them the deer management information system, which is used as a tool to show how WLD starts the regulations. It begins with the field biologists on the ground. They spend time interacting with the public, co-managers, and other groups. The database is a way for the biologists to automatically archive data. The intent is to use the system to review and summarize information pertained to deer management. It does not calculate quotas or general recommendations; those items are calculated by staff. WLD has various different means of calculating numbers, for reasons such as population. Ultimately, the system gives historic trends and estimates. As comments are entered, it calculates what the information is telling them.

**Ms. Trotter** asked if actual number of diseases, etc. are being put into the deer management system at this time; **Mr. Rudolph** responded that WLD is not putting this information into the system as of yet, but that Biologists has that information available. WLD has been talking about pulling all the conditions together, and creating reports for areas (in general). This would be updated every few years rather than every year.

There is a tool for managing deer numbers through hunting, and a tool for other things, such as dealing with the issues that people express. In terms of management, WLD did another survey in 2006 and asked people: 1) what hunters felt factors were to be considered; and 2) which issues are most problematic when they hunt. The results showed that 81% of hunter satisfaction is with the number of deer, and 75% is with mature bucks.

**Ms. Boyd** asked what the social factors are, and how does WLD gage carry capacity in terms of vegetation. **Mr. Rudolph** answered that WLD is trying to get the perception of the hunters. Regarding vegetation, there is 48% crop damage, and 49% vegetative management. **Mr. Roberson**

mentioned that when attending compartment reviews, he sees the deer numbers increasing; very rarely does he see a decrease in their numbers. **Mr. Manson** commented that in Michigan, if you have over \$1,000 in damage when having an accident with a deer, it must be reported. There are 60,000 reported collisions each year.

**Mr. Rudolph** reported that other input regarding problems is: 75% mature bucks; 72% hunting locations in regards to mature bucks; 81% thought total number of deer should be considered; and 62% thought that the number of deer is a problem. Basically, hunters do not see vegetation or crop damage as a big issue. Only about half of hunters buy antlerless licenses.

**Mr. Roberson** asked if WLD had given any thought to surveying those who bare the brunt of the deer problems, i.e. land managers and farmers. **Mr. Rudolph** responded that he does not know if there are current plans to deal with that specifically. The database, at this time, provides hunter information to survey.

**Mr. Suchovsky** questioned if WLD has asked hunters how acceptable they find the division doing what is necessary to increase the number of bucks. **Mr. Rudolph** answered that there is interest in adopting some sort of regulation to accomplish some of these goals. Only about 33% of hunters would support additional regulations. Last year, different regulations were adopted to push more harvesting of antlerless deer. In 2010, hunters could use their license to shoot antlerless deer as well as bucks.

**Mr. Suchovsky** asked if there are statistics at the check stations. **Mr. Rudolph** stated that over the last few years, less check stations were in operation. Before that, 8% of deer were checked. In a harvest survey (involving approximately 50,000 hunters) the result was around a 60% response.

**Ms. Boyd** commented there is a lot of modeling going on. She wondered if we need actual on-the-ground surveys that look at the impact on vegetation. You can see dramatic differences in what is within the fence, and what is outside the fence (deer yard). **Mr. Rudolph** responded that the Michigan Natural Features Inventory has a research project to look at select state land and indicators of local deer numbers compared to silvicultural practices, and to correlate what the land looks like. WLD does not have a systematic database that generates this information, though.

**Ms. Boyd** stated that the FMAC is interested in this subject because of land management issues. She wondered how to get other users to the table to address this issue. She commented that at the meetings she has attended, most people there were primarily hunters. **Mr. Rudolph** responded that most of the work that has been done with the general public is concerns about collisions, etc. A lot of people who have moved out of the cities like to see the deer, and most likely will not advocate a reduction in numbers.

**Mr. Suchovsky** commented that he does not like to go to public meetings where he disagrees with what is being said. He questioned how these meetings can be structured so we get what we need while reducing the unfavorable reactions of those in attendance.

**Ms. Boyd** stated that WLD does a lot of surveys, but asked if there are ways for WLD to survey other user groups, also, i.e. lumber workers etc. **Mr. Rudolph** responded that WLD has done some work in this area, but they have done more work with farmers than with others. Some staff in the Upper Peninsula have developed a camp survey which is used as indicators of deer numbers and hunters' thoughts. **Ms. Trotter** commented that the deer advisory team has worked on making its members a diverse group of people. She stated the last meeting was a good quorum since a lot of the hunter

groups were able to talk with forestry people. The team would like to get more urban people at the table.

**Mr. Roberson** suggested that WLD should use groups such as the logging industry as part of its surveys, rather than just hunters and the general public. He believes there are too many deer and thinks a way needs to be found to outreach to loggers, the timber industry, farmers, etc. **Mr. Rudolph** responded that this is often covered in camp issues with the deer cooperative survey. He agreed that if the resources are available, WLD should see if there is a way to gather information from additional groups if feasible. **Ms. Boyd** stated there are ways to get resources to WLD to answer some of these questions. Forest Management Division contracts out because it does not have the resources, just as WLD does not have the resources. She stated the FMAC should think about ways to get other groups to the table, and to get data collected.

**Mr. Rudolph** reported that WLD has started a project with MSU to evaluate deer cooperatives. The cooperatives talk about the importance of taking antlerless deer. WLD wanted to evaluate if those people are doing anything different.

**Ms. Elbing** commented that we are talking about scant money to do this type of work, and she was wondering what ultimately the FMAC needs to accomplish, what the purpose of a survey would be, and how the FMAC can use it. **Ms. Boyd** responded that the NRC hears all the time about deer numbers, but what they are not hearing is the other side of it, i.e. the impact deer has on other areas. **Mr. Melow** stated there is not data available that says “we have x number of deer, and this is the damage that has been created”; there is no correlation that exists. **Mr. Suchovsky** asked how the size of ownership impacts the deer population problem. Tied to that, the FMAC needs to take a serious look at how and when people are allowed to hunt. He wondered if part of the management should be the management of hunting. The FMAC needs to look at this as part of a solution to a bigger problem.

**Dr. LaCourt** commented that the presentation produced great dialogue, and she appreciated getting both perspectives. **Mr. Paulson** agreed. **Chair Botti** thanked Mr. Rudolph for the presentation, agreeing that it was a good discussion.

**Ms. Boyd** asked where the FMAC goes from here. She understands there is an intensive survey being conducted, but wondered what role the FMAC plays in it. **Mr. Roberson** stated that he would be willing to work with a small subcommittee prior to the next meeting to determine this role.

**Mr. Melow, Ms. Trotter** and **Mr. Roberson** agreed to work on it together.

**Chair Botti** invited Mr. Rudolph to attend the next FMAC meeting to see what the subcommittee came up with, and thanked Mr. Rudolph again.

**V. Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP) Program** – Lynne Boyd, Warren Suchovsky, Gary Melow

**Ms. Boyd** commented that she had hoped to have Ms. Cara Boucher, DNR and Mr. Dale Allen, Farm Services Agency, with her to assist in the presentation but neither could attend. She referred the FMAC to two handouts that were included in the FMAC meeting packet. She turned the meeting over to Mr. Melow.

**Mr. Melow** stated that the FMAC had talked about BCAP before. Originally there was a subsidy model program that applied to the industry, but it did not achieve what was hoped for. The thought was that you could provide \$ to \$ subsidy to the provider of feedstock; this was

supposed to create a market for energy wood. Instead, it only shifted the market and did not result in any new energy production.

**Mr. Melow** reported that in April 2010, after Commodity Credit Corporation had spent \$450 million on the program, it was suspended. What was left was that fuel vendors and procurers of wood could sign up to provide for two years and still get a dollar match. The types of fuels that were eligible for the payment was dramatically reduced because if there was a market for it, it was not eligible, or fuel coming from forest lands must meet certain criteria, such as SFI or FSC. As a means to exclude mill waste, it was determined that byproducts must occur in the field. One additional change is that organizations that are connected can now work together.

**Mr. Melow** stated there were final rules issued last fall concerning project specific areas. This would provide a subsidy to the landowner or grower, to grow or manage for dedicated crops. The incentive is that the FSA will provide 75% of cost with a 25% match. This is attractive due to the annual payment component; the landowner gets this payment because they have crops in energy production.

**Mr. Shine** asked if there is something that compels someone to participate; **Mr. Melow** responded that there is a contract. FSA has determined that existing forests qualify for the program. Landowners can enter a contract to manage the forest and use materials that come off it for energy production.

**Mr. Melow** stated that there is a lot of cost-cutting in Washington, and this program is one that has been targeted. There are unknowns as to whether the program will work, if the economics will work, and if there will even be a program in the future. There is a potential to access wood fiber that is currently not accessible, and get it into energy production. With a lot of work and evaluation, there may be some value to it.

**Mr. Suchovsky** commented there were biomass producers before BCAP came on the scene, and they did not receive big subsidies. It would have made more sense to not subsidize and use the money as an investment to put up facilities that utilize this type of material. From the agricultural community there is a lot of opposition to this; they do not like the "payment for x number of years" because there is not a way that a crop farmer can compete with that; the other argument is why the land is not already being utilized. There is also concern over the definition of eligible biomass.

**Ms. Boyd** reported the State Forester responded to these concerns last year, and looked at what plans are acceptable. Ms. Boucher composed a letter last year regarding this and has not been asked for anything since. Opinions have not changed as to what is acceptable. There has been some discussion on project areas; the entire Upper Peninsula would be considered one project area. Part of the concern with eligibility is if it is limited to SFI, FSC, Tree Farm and some stewardship areas, that would reduce the number of eligible sources. **Mr. Melow** commented that with forest health prescriptions out there, there will be very little that will fall under eligible. Many people cannot commit to 15 years; the value is minimal. There is greater potential in doing short-term pilot programs to come up with equipment and methods that may be useful in the future.

**Ms. Boyd** stated that state forest management does not play much of a role in this. **Mr. Melow** commented if BCAP survives it will not be of much benefit. We will not see dedicated energy crops growing unless there is certainty that there is a market for it. Issues such as EPA standards and another half dozen major uncertainties out there must be cleared up before it will

ever get close to being built. Part of the problem has to do with an old economic model and what it is going to take to create a new model. There is still much discussion to be had.

**Mr. Suchovsky** suggested the FMAC keep this on the table for a future date. There are about 2 million acres of CFA lands in Michigan, with 4 million approximate state acres. Tree Farm has another million and the state controls about 50% of the eligible source. He would like the FMAC to continue with a role in this issue, and to keep track of what is happening with it.

**Ms. Boyd** stated the DNR's objective is to look at sustainability, not at where the wood goes once the timber sale is over. **Mr. Roberson** asked who the eligible owner is; who collects the subsidy, the landowner or the logger. **Mr. Suchovsky** responded it is determined by how the contract is written.

**Chair Botti** asked if this subject was something the FMAC would like to revisit. **Mr. Melow** stated he would provide updates as they come in.

## VI. Standing Discussion Items

### • Items from last meeting:

**Ms. Boyd** reported that FMAC 'thank you' letters had been sent out for those members leaving the committee.

**Ms. Boyd** gave an update on tapping trees. The DNR's policy is that it is not permitted. There are concerns with the tubing. The DNR has looked at what is happening in other states, and the impact tapping has on the trees. From a state perspective, the DNR will always have problems with leaving tubing in place. She stated that everything she has read has indicated the tubing has to be left out. **Mr. Suchovsky** wondered if this could be more site-specific. **Ms. Boyd** responded that at this time it is hard to say, but the question would be how much effort should the DNR put into something that would affect such a small amount of state land. **Mr. Paulson** reported there has been some small-scale discussion on sugar-bushing on national forest land, some tribal interest, etc. Overall, there is basically a noninterest in doing this in Michigan's federal forests.

**Ms. Boyd** discussed the groups that are not represented on the FMAC, and asked the committee where they would like to go from here. Most groups are represented, but Ms. Boyd stated the FMAC is still lacking a land trust person, an MSU extension person, and the FMAC also lost a few industry members. **Mr. Melow** suggested the possibility of manufacturers of chippers. **Ms. Boyd** reported the objective is to get specific nominations for the groups the committee is lacking.

**Chair Botti** asked the FMAC if they wanted to make nominations now or via e-mail.

**Dr. Keathley** stated he can fill both roles as an MSU and MSU Extension representative.

**Mr. Melow** asked about the Forest Products Council. **Ms. Boyd** responded that the DNR has talked with them about this, but have not received a response back. She knows they are currently short staffed.

**Mr. Shine** asked about the Conservation Districts. **Ms. Boyd** responded that the role of the FMAC is to advise the DNR on this, so it has to look at what role the DNR has in managing private lands. Currently, Forest Stewardship does not have representation on the recreation side of it. **Mr. Melow** asked about duplication of efforts between FSAC and FMAC. He wanted to know if the FMAC needs to think about how it is managing the forest to include the energy component; should it be suggesting research etc. **Mr. Suchovsky** commented that several of

the FMAC members worked on the Woody Biomass Guidelines, and a number of the members were involved in the revision of the Soil and Water Quality Manual. **Ms. Boyd** added that the committee also worked on GAFMPs, and it still reviews this annually. The most important thing is to get a variety of user groups to face each other to discuss the different uses that take place on state land.

**Mr. Melow** commented that he thinks with the role that forest resources will be expected to play, i.e. economic development, the FMAC should look at what it does and how it functions, and if needed take it up a notch. The FMAC is currently discussing the same issues that have been present for the last 10 years, yet nothing has been resolved. **Chair Botti** asked the FMAC to read the bylaws prior to the next meeting, and be prepared to discuss this issue.

- **Legislative Update**

**Ms. Boyd** stated that since the last legislative report, a new bill has been introduced that caps the state's ability to own more than 4 million acres of state land. A hearing before Senator Casperson will be held on Thursday. The DNR's concerns are that capping flies directly in the face of the snowmobile program for permanent easements (a bill was recently signed for this), and establishing the MSTAC and Equine Trails Subcommittee, which is looking for permission to establish a statewide network. These things will not happen if this bill passes. The off-road vehicle (ORV) program will also be impacted. The DNR will not be able to get easements for land that is landlocked. The Rails-to-Trails program will be impacted as well. The Iron Heritage trail, in the Upper Peninsula (U.P.), has been 12 years in the process and has huge impacts on the economy in the U.P. There is a question as to what happens if we do not own the headwaters, etc. The DNR is most consistent in the timber industry, but tourism would be affected on public land.

**Dr. Keathley** stated that the bill, as he reads it, is not causing a net loss or at least not a huge loss, if the state is outbidding against the public to get land. There is some point where everyone would hit the tipping point as to the state not needing to own any more land.

**Ms. Boyd** reported that senate bill 24 is the bill that has been introduced. **Mr. Manson** asked if the state did not just do an inventory; **Ms. Boyd** responded that the DNR went through the evaluation and looked at if it is meeting conservation needs, and looked at lands that it would like to get rid of. The Parks and Recreation Division is looking at expanding lands. **Ms. Boyd** believes there is room for improvement, but the most important thing is to be sure we are managing for the best results. There are funding sources that are dedicated to buying state land. The DNR scored fourth in the nation on the Legacy Project.

**Ms. Elbing** asked if the FMAC can make comments on legislation. **Ms. Boyd** responded that it can make recommendations to the Director. **Chair Botti** asked if this is something the FMAC should take action on. **Ms. Boyd** responded that she was sharing this information with the FMAC as individuals to let the groups they are representing know what is going on.

- **NRC Budget Reports**

**Ms. Boyd** referred the FMAC to the report included in the meeting packet, asking for questions; there were none.

- **Improving Public Involvement Process**

No discussion was necessary.

- **DNRE Issues**

No discussion was necessary.

- **Biodiversity Conservation Update** – Lynne Boyd  
**Ms. Boyd** reported that the Director has directed that there will be no net loss of timber harvesting from state land. The DNR will be back in front of the auditors again in the fall, and is again extending the deadline for the Regional State Forest Management Plan.

**Chair Botti** asked each FMAC member for an update on their programs:

- **Snowmobile - Mr. Manson** reported there was not much of a winter this year as most of the snow was downstate. From the tourism aspect, it was down. The center of the state had the worst snow they have had in awhile, to the point that they did not groom, but it was bare ground for most of February. In the Eastern Upper Peninsula, the trails opened late and did not get much snow. The Western Upper Peninsula was good, but people in other states did not need to travel (Minnesota, Wisconsin, etc.) because their own states did well. Permit sales will be down about 10 percent. The good news is that it was the safest winter ever.
- **Tree Farms - Mr. Jones** reported there have been some administrative problems and some people have had to leave. They are looking at filling positions in the tree farm system, and will be moving the administration office to the Michigan Forest Products Council although this move is still in negotiations. In May, they will be having a meeting with Senator Stabenow on state and national concerns.
- **Department of Agriculture (AG) - Mr. Shine** reported that the Governor signed PA 1 and 2 of 2011, which institutionalized the AG insurance program. The Department of AG believes this is a good thing. A benefit of this is the status is clearer if they go through the W2 year process of fixing things on the farm to become eligibly verified.
- **MUCC - Ms. Trotter** reported that next week is the forestry conference at the Lansing Radisson. Ms. Boyd will be providing the introduction and Mr. Charlie Becker from Plum Creek will talk about community forest land and its benefit to the state. The bulk of the rest of the conference will be Mr. Botti giving an overview nonindustrial private forest lands in the state, and private landowners. The legislature has been invited to attend, but there are other events being held on the same day so who will be in attendance is not certain. The conference will be good as it will raise issues with a lot of different industries represented.
- **National Forest Service (Service) - Mr. Paulson** reported there has been public notification of a supplemental environmental impact statement as a result of a lawsuit and court decision on the Huron-Manistee NF Forest Plan. They have received over 9,000 public comments. The Service has changed its priorities for the year. **Mr. Paulson** reported the Regional Forester is leaving to go to Portland, Oregon, and it is unclear who the replacement will be at this time. There is also a new Director of Recreation in the regional office, Mr. Art Jeffers.
- **MEDC - Dr. LaCourt** reported that a website has gone live that highlights collaborative work being done with MEDC and Michigan Tech. You can find the information at [www.michiganforestbiofuels.org](http://www.michiganforestbiofuels.org).
- **Michigan Biomass - Mr. Melow** reported the Michigan Public Service Commission Biomass Committee has been resurrected. They have assembled a variety of individuals. They have also created a steering committee to try to resolve some of the current issues.
- **Suchovsky Logging - Mr. Suchovsky** reported they have turned the corner on the tough times they had in the fall; they are now moving in other directions. They have been getting a good response from their membership in dues and identifying issues of concerns. He has heard many loggers say they will have to shut down their businesses if diesel fuel reaches \$5 per gallon.

**VII. Next Meeting Date / Agenda Items**

Meeting Date: May 11, 2011

Location: MUCC, Lansing

**VIII. Agenda Items:**

Invasives

**IX. Adjournment**

The March 9, 2011 FMAC meeting adjourned at 4:07 p.m.