

**FOREST MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (FMAC)  
MEETING MINUTES**

**July 8, 2015**

Constitution Hall

DNR Director's Conference Room

525 West Allegan, Lansing

**FMAC MEMBERS PRESENT**

Mr. Bill Botti, Chair, Michigan Forest Association

Mr. Bill Manson, Michigan Snowmobile Association

Mr. Warren Suchovsky, Suchovsky Logging

Mr. Scott Robbins, Michigan Forest Products Council

Mr. Stephen Shine, Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (via conference call)

Mr. Bill O'Neill, Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR)

Dr. Terry Sharik, Michigan Technological University (MTU)

Ms. Kim Korbecki, Assistant, MDNR

**FMAC MEMBERS ABSENT**

Mr. Marvin Roberson, Sierra Club

Mr. Gary Melow, Michigan Biomass

Ms. Amy Trotter, Michigan United Conservation Clubs

**FMAC ADVISORS PRESENT**

Ms. Leslie Auriemmo, United States Forest Service (USFS), Huron-Manistee

**FMAC ADVISORS ABSENT**

Mr. Andy Henriksen, United Department of Agriculture Conservation District

**PUBLIC PRESENT**

Dr. Steve M. Schmitt, Wildlife Division, MDNR

Dr. Richard Kobe, Michigan State University

Mr. Steve Goldman, USFS Huron-Manistee

Mr. Mark Rudnicki, MTU

Mr. Keith Creagh, Director, MDNR

**Chair Botti** called the July 8, 2015 Forest Management Advisory Committee (FMAC) meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. He welcomed everyone and asked for introductions around the table.

**I. Action Items**

• **Adoption of July 8 FMAC Agenda**

**Chair Botti** asked for comments on or additions to the July 8 FMAC agenda; there were none. The agenda passed unanimously, as presented.

• **Adoption of May 6 FMAC meeting minutes**

**Chair Botti** asked for discussion; there was none.

**MOTION: Mr. Suchovsky** moved to adopt the May 6 FMAC meeting minutes, with edits sent to Ms. Korbecki prior to this meeting; supported by **Mr. Robbins**. The May 6 FMAC meeting minutes, as edited, was adopted unanimously.

**II. Public Comment**

None

### III. How Forest Service Pays PILT Taxes

**Mr. Steve Goldman**, United States Forest Service (USFS), Huron-Manistee, provided the [attached](#) handout. A highlight of what he covered follows:

- Region 9 of the USFS has three units in Michigan consisting of the Huron-Manistee National Forest, the Ottawa National Forest, and the Hiawatha National Forest.
- There are 4 types of federal payments to states:
  - a) **25 Percent Payment** - “is based on gross national forest receipts within a national forest and is allocated to counties by the proportion of the total national forest acreage within each county in the particular national forest.”
  - b) **Secure Rural Schools** – “is an alternative to 25 percent payments. This program allows counties to elect the manner in which their payment is calculated. A county may choose to continue to receive the 25-percent payments based on a 7-year rolling average of receipts from national forest located in the state. Counties may elect to receive the full payment option, in which Title I dollars are allocated to roads and schools while Title II and III funds are spent on work completed on or that benefit national forest system lands.” Secure Rural Schools supersedes the 25% payment. **Dr. Sharik** asked if the USFS provides the assessment on these lands. **Mr. Goldman** responded yes it does; high secure rural schools can sometimes reduce the PILT payments.

Secure Rural Schools has three titles:

- Schools and roads
- Funds coming to the national forests for infrastructure and roads (can be used to)
  - ✓ Improve the maintenance of existing infrastructure;
  - ✓ Implement stewardship objectives that enhance forest ecosystems; and
  - ✓ Restore and improve land health and water quality.
- Reimburse Counties for emergency services

Basically, 80% of Secure Rural School funds have to go into Title I and then the funds are spread between the other titles.

- c) **Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) payment** – “are federal payments to local governments that help offset losses in property taxes due to nontaxable federal lands within their boundaries. The key law that implements the payment is Public Law 94-565. The law recognizes that the inability of local government to collect property taxes on federally-owned land can create a financial impact.” PILT is federal payments to local units of governments that offset the loss of property taxes on federal lands.

PILT is based on the number of federal entitlement acres in a county, based on population, receipt sharing payments and the amount of federal land. This is not a USFS or Department of Agriculture program; it is administered by the U.S. Department of the Interior.

PILT is influenced by Secure Rural Schools; the county may be reduced if it receives a portion of payment that is larger than the 25% payment. PILT looks at only the roads portion of schools and roads allocation in Title 1 and Title 3, and then puts that in the formula to determine the PILT calculation.

d) **Mineral Royalties** – “for lands acquired by the forest service under the Weeks Act, which includes most of the Huron-Manistee national forest lands, the federal government shares 25 percent of gross mining receipts with the state. Mineral royalties historically have been added to the 25 Percent Fund, earmarked for schools and road, but after 1992, an administrative change shifted these payments to a separate fund for counties, not earmarked for schools and roads. Since 1992, royalties for minerals activities on NFS lands have been paid directly to counties by the Bureau of Land Management.” There are oil & gas mineral rights in the Huron-Manistee national forest, but Mr. Goldman wasn’t sure about the other national forests in Michigan.

- PILT payments for the 3 national forests are: Hiawatha \$1.2 million; Huron-Manistee \$1.1 million; and Ottawa \$1.8 million.
- In the spring, Congress reauthorized the Secure Rural Schools funding, but did not give an option for counties; it just went with the last formula. **Chair Botti** asked if the counties received any compensation for this error; **Mr. Goldman** responded the counties did receive retroactive funding, but it was received late.

**Mr. Suchovsky** asked if stewardship contracting figures into the revenues;

**Mr. Goldman** replied the forest service retains the receipts or pay through contracts to do work, but that doesn’t get calculated into the rolling averages. As an example, if they are doing \$500,000 of work in an area, all that money will be returned but it will be for different work than the 25% payment.

**Chair Botti** thanked Mr. Goldman for his presentation.

#### IV. **Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) and Avian Influenza Discussion – Dr. Steve Schmitt** **Dr. Schmitt** gave a PowerPoint presentation ([attached](#)) to the FMAC. He is from the MDNR’s Wildlife Disease Laboratory.

Highlights regarding CWD follow:

- The first confirmed case was in Meridian Township in Ingham County. This was the first confirmed CWD-positive wild deer in Michigan. There was a captive whitetail doe that was positive in 2008 in Kent County. A genetics test suggested the deer in Meridian Township was local but how it became infected is unknown. Possibilities are the disease was brought in with an infected live deer or in a contaminated carcass from out of state.
- CWD is a slow, progressive neurological disease and occurs only in the deer family. Incubation can be 5 years or longer so symptoms are not always seen right away, and it is always fatal.
- The disease can be transmitted directly or indirectly. Prions can stay infectious in the soil for many years. **Mr. Suchovsky** asked for the definition of prions. **Dr. Schmitt** responded it is infectious proteins. **Dr. Kobe** asked about molecular genetics. **Dr. Schmitt** replied that researchers are trying to look into that, and have just recently been talking about different strains of CWD.
- There is no effective treatment or vaccine.
- **Dr. Schmitt** reported that CWD is currently in 20 states and two Canadian provinces. **Dr. Sharik** asked if this was a temperate region phenomenon. **Dr. Schmitt** responded that CWD has only been found in North America.
- The CWD plan was created in 2002 and updated in 2012. Fundamental Goals of the Plan:
  - a. Early identification of the disease;

- b. Once found, limit further transmission;
- c. Immediately begin testing deer in Meridian Township to determine prevalence and distribution of the disease; and
- d. Eradication of CWD if results of surveillance suggest that it is likely to be achievable.
- Management Actions:
  - a. Complete a population survey;
  - b. Establish a CWD management zone;
  - c. Implement a deer feeding and baiting ban;
  - d. Prohibit the movement of deer or deer parts from the CWD management zone; and
  - e. Intensify surveillance efforts on free-ranging deer within the zone, with mandatory check and CWD testing of all deer.
- Cooperation of hunters will be very important.
  - a. Cooperation and participation from hunters will be critical in combating this disease;
  - b. Continue supporting Meridian Township's urban deer management program; and
  - c. Hunters will know disease status of their deer.

Highlights regarding Avian Influenza follow:

- Three Canada goslings in Sterling Heights, Macomb County, were symptomatic. The Wildlife Disease Laboratory received confirmation on June 6 from USDA's National Veterinary Services Laboratory, that the goslings were infected with Highly Pathogenic AI (HPAI), H5N2. This was the first time HPAI has been detected in wild birds in Michigan.
- Avian influenza is a big problem for the poultry industry and is not a problem in wild waterfowl. There are no human concerns at this time. It is common in waterfowl, and can infect other animals such as dogs, pigs and horses.
- It most often infects ducks, geese, swans and shorebirds and typically causes few, if any symptoms. Infected wild birds usually do not get sick themselves but can still spread it to other birds.
- Certain HPAI viruses (some H5 and H7 strains) cause widespread disease and death in domestic poultry.
- People, vehicles and other objects can unknowingly spread this virus from one farm to another.
- The MDNR created a plan in 2006. Its response efforts are designed to limit the spread in wildlife and prevent transmission from wild birds to domestic poultry.
  - a. Create an AI Core Area, which is a 10-mile radius around the positive cases
  - b. Create an AI Management Zone. Any counties that touch the AI core area are considered within the AI management zone. The zone is Macomb and Oakland counties;
  - c. Suspend goose round-up and relocation statewide, except in approved situations where there are elevated health and safety concerns;
  - d. Heighten AI surveillance throughout southeastern Michigan;
  - e. Increase biosecurity measures for anybody handling geese; and
  - f. Continue statewide AI surveillance, which includes responding to suspicious sick and dead animals, testing ducks and geese that are being banded, and testing hunter-harvested waterfowl.

**Chair Botti** asked who conducts the testing. **Dr. Schmitt** responded the Wildlife Division and MSU employees do the testing.

**Dr. Schmitt** remarked that of the two diseases, CWD is the bigger concern. The Wildlife Disease Laboratory will determine the number of deer that need to be tested, and are hoping the disease has not been established yet.

**Chair Botti** asked if, while looking at invasive species, they are seeing any parallels in response plans. **Dr. Schmitt** replied some are very similar, i.e. the way both are moved by humans.

**Mr. Manson** asked if there is a way to get rid of the prions in the soil. **Dr. Schmitt** responded no, it is very stable in soil and can only be in activated 1800 degree heat and very strong chemicals.

**Chair Botti** thanked Dr. Schmitt for his presentation and welcomed Director Keith Creagh, MDNR.

V. **Director Creagh** commented he saw the FMAC was meeting in the building and decided to drop in. He asked if there were questions from them regarding the MDNR Land Strategy.

**Chair Botti** asked if the FMAC is doing what the Director wants it to do. **Director Creagh** stated he was charged with improving upon or changing the local engagement model. In changing its community dialog, the MDNR's footprint could be improved. This is part of the Land Strategy issue. He has heard how the MDNR can improve the predictability of the engagement experience. It has to figure out how to preserve and protect as well. The FMAC has the representation to accomplish that.

Reasonable access needs to be looked at, working with Michigan Snowmobile Association and with the off-road vehicle community to open up trail heads, etc. The MDNR did 9 pilot programs which identified management practices.

Once a road package is approved, there will be increased pressure on state land where some of the aggregate exists. **Director Creagh** discussed the recent Graymont deal as an example. He stated that the MDNR needs a more thoughtful and deliberative process for complex decisions.

The MDNR Land Strategy is solid. The legislature would like to codify some practices and Director Creagh is supportive of that goal. He believes the Land Strategy is possible. The MDNR had a good mix of stakeholders in the drafting of the strategy.

**Director Creagh** touched on senate bills 39, 40 and 206. He has conversed with some legislators on senate bills 39 and 40 and believes there is room for discussion.

**Director Creagh** commented on the need to improve local engagement and the road access issue. He mentioned Forest Resources Division is developing a forest road plan to assist with addressing the access problem.

**Director Creagh** also mentioned the MDNR needs to work on sustainable timber harvest numbers. He stated the FMAC could help inform their organizations and others on this issue. The MDNR is trying to portray forestry as a positive aspect on the landscape.

Director Creagh also talked about the Good Neighbor Authority and the MDNR's relationship with the United States Forest Service. He also stated the FMAC brings a unique perspective on multiple things.

**Mr. Suchovsky** expressed his concerns on the land cap issue and his belief that there are not enough people that truly understand the multitude of the whole thing. There is a significance of

having public forest land to offset carbon removal and the only way to do that is to increase the acres of forest land to be harvested. He believes the MDNR needs to attract more people with the knowledge needed to see the big picture. **Director Creagh** responded that he believes forestry will continue to be a topic of conversation. He said that public access is part of what makes Michigan unique. The Land Strategy sites that potentially 240,000 acres could be put on the market, mostly because of boundary issues.

**Dr. Sharik** stated the MDNR needs to be more involved in integrated planning as opposed to sticking to its own ownership. He would like to see more in terms of human resources or human capacity, i.e. a link to higher education. **Mr. O'Neill** stated that in order for the MDNR to continue to move forward, it needed a land strategy. He mentioned working with the land cap until it passes and the possibility of working with the legislature to get the cap removed.

**Director Creagh** thanked the FMAC for what it does. He commented there is a lot going on around forests and forest management, and the MDNR is trying to change perspectives.

#### VI. **Review Land Strategy (MEMBER VOTE)**

**Chair Botti** asked the FMAC for further discussion regarding the [Department of Natural Resources Managed Public Land Strategy](#) (strategy) document it was deciding whether to support or not support.

**Mr. O'Neill** stated the FMAC has been a part of putting together the land strategy in the past. A number of people have talked with the FMAC, led a little by Mr. Melow and Mr. Roberson, but it had never made a decision on it. There are some that would challenge why the MDNR needs land at all. Bringing this to advisory committees and getting their opinion on record can assist the Director when talking with the legislature.

**MOTION: Mr. Manson** moved to offer FMAC support of the Department of Natural Resources Managed Public Land Strategy; supported by **Dr. Sharik**.

**Chair Botti** asked for discussion on the motion, wondering if the FMAC was ready to lend its support. After some discussion, the FMAC voted on supporting the strategy:

#### **VOTE:**

**AYES: 6 (1 vote via conference call; 5 votes required for quorum)**

**NAYES: 0**

The vote to support the Department of Natural Resources Managed Public Land Strategy passed unanimously. **Mr. O'Neill** requested the FMAC Chair send a formal letter of support on behalf of the FMAC to Director Creagh.

#### VII. **Standing Discussion Items**

- **TAC update**

**Mr. Suchovsky** asked if the TAC had appointed its new member yet. One person has been confirmed as interested but there are others interested that will be vetted as well.

- **Legislative Update**

The FMAC was asked to review senate bills 39 & 40 for discussion at a future meeting. The bills are regarding issues with road access.

- **FMAC member program updates**

1. **USFS**

- a) **Ms. Auriemmo** reported that she had met with the MDNR on the Good Neighbor Authority (GNA). It is a complicated program and they have agreed to meet again to decide how to best work together.
- b) The Huron-Manistee had a rainbow gathering that about 1600 attended. There were still approximately 400 people onsite as of yesterday.

2. **MDNR**

**Mr. O'Neill** reported the MDNR will be meeting with all USFS offices to discuss the GNA and how to move forward. He will report back to the FMAC once all meetings have taken place.

3. **MDARD**

**Mr. Shine** reported that the Qualified Forestry Program keeps rolling along and that they expect another 100,000 acres added soon. The conservation district foresters are being kept busy.

4. **MICHIGAN FOREST ASSOCIATION**

**Chair Botti** stated the MFA's goal is to educate people on forestry-related issues. They conducted a workshop for teachers at the Ralph A. MacMullen Conference Center. They had 17 teachers and various MDNR staff in attendance. He felt the workshop was very successful and MFA received a lot of support from the forest products industry. One teacher commented that their view of clearcutting had completely changed.

VIII. **Next meeting**

September 9, 2015, Michigan United Conservation Clubs, 2101 Wood Street, Lansing.

IX. **Agenda Items**

Update from Mr. Trevor VanDyke, MDNR (possible future meeting)

Review of MDNR's new and Improved Website (September meeting)

Update on the 5-year review of the Forest Action Plan, Mr. Scott Jones, MDNR (September meeting)

GNA update (future meeting)

X. **Adjournment**

**Chair Botti** adjourned the July 8, 2015 Forest Management Advisory Committee meeting at 4:09 p.m.