

MINUTES

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION *Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee (MSPAC)*

June 9, 2011
Lansing Center, Room 205

PRESENT FOR THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

Commissioner Hurley Coleman, MSPAC Chair
Commissioner Mary Brown, MSPAC Vice-Chair

PRESENT FOR THE MSPAC

Jim Bradley
Mike Foote
Brad Garmon, for Chris Graham
Jim Hendricks
Robert Hoffmeyer
Amy Trotter, for MUCC
Todd Scott
Marne Smiley

ABSENT

Tom Ferguson
Chris Graham
Mike McDonald
Mary Pitcher
Bill Rose
Janet Mansfield, Ex-Officio Member
Duncan Wyeth, Ex-Officio Member

SPECIAL GUESTS

Murdock Jemerson (former MSPAC member)
Chuck Nelson (former MSPAC member)

OTHERS PRESENT

Commissioner John Madigan
Director Rodney Stokes
Stacy Welling, DNR Upper Peninsula Regional Coordinator
Gary Owen, DNR Legislative Liaison
Lynne Boyd, DNR Forest Management Chief
Jim Dexter, Acting DNR Fisheries Chief
Mark Hoffman, DNR Marketing and Education Chief
Kevin Frailey, DNR Education Services Manager
John Cherry, DNR Grants Management
Other DNR and Parks and Recreation Staff

PUBLIC PRESENT

Chris Claver, Gongwer News Service
Jerry Crandall, MIRS News
Joyce Krepps, MUCC Board Member, and
Bill Krepps, former MUCC President
Other interested parties

MICHIGAN STATE PARKS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Chair Hurley Coleman, Jr. called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m., with roll call and introductions around the room. Chair Coleman asked if committee members or DNR staff had anything to add or adjust on the agenda. No alterations to the agenda were offered.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chair Coleman asked for any comments or edits to the April 7, 2011, Minutes of the Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee (MSPAC). No other edits or comments were offered. Chair Coleman asked for a motion to approve the Minutes. ***Vice Chair Mary Brown motioned to approve the Minutes; Mike Foote seconded the motion; the April 7, 2011 Minutes were unanimously approved.***

RECOGNITIONS

Chair Coleman announced that there were two former Michigan State Park Advisory Committee members present that the committee would like to recognize and honor for their support and dedication to the Michigan state parks system and the advisory committee since 2004, and to applaud their efforts in getting the Recreation Passport legislation introduced and passed in 2010.

Murdock Jemerson, who recently resigned as the City of Lansing's Parks and Recreation Director, was the chair of the former "*Citizens Committee for Michigan State Parks*" since it was established by Governor Granholm in 2004, and continued as the chair through 2009. Jemerson recently accepted a position with the DNR Parks and Recreation Division as a district supervisor and, therefore, submitted his resignation as a member of the Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee.

Dr. Chuck Nelson, associate professor at Michigan State University, was the chair of the former "*Citizens Committee for Michigan State Parks*" Finance Subcommittee. Dr. Nelson has always been closely involved with the DNR and has assisted the DNR numerous times with varying projects or reports. It was through his leadership as the Finance Subcommittee Chair, as well as being the liaison between the committee and the legislature, that the Recreation Passport legislation was passed and enacted in 2010.

Chair Coleman asked that the following statement be incorporated as part of the official record:

“The job that both Mr. Jemerson and Dr. Nelson did to help develop and create this committee was not insignificant. It involved the creation of by-laws and procedures, interaction with the DNR and interconnection with all DNR divisions, as well as larger recreation communities. It also involved significant involvement as visible representatives at legislative hearings and public meetings. Mr. Jemerson and Dr. Nelson are leaving this committee during a time when history has been made for the Michigan State Parks system, and after the successful passing of legislation that created the Recreation Passport, a new long-term sustainable funding source for Michigan state parks. Mr. Jemerson and Dr. Nelson should both be commended for their support and dedication to the DNR, Michigan state parks, the committee, its members and its constituencies, and to the general public. Their efforts are no where near the award or recognition that is being presented to them today. Mr. Jemerson and Dr. Nelson are legacies and should hold their heads high. The citizens of the State of Michigan and future generations will continue to benefit from both their contributions well into the future.”

Committee members and other DNR staff made their individual comments in commending Jemerson and Nelson for their long-term commitments and efforts, and they were unanimously applauded for their efforts. Mr. Jemerson and Dr. Nelson thanked the committee for the opportunity to serve the DNR, to serve on this committee, and to serve the citizens of this state. They also commented that they will continue to support Michigan state parks and the DNR well into the future.

Chair Coleman read the Resolutions honoring both Murdock Jemerson and Dr. Chuck Nelson for their efforts, and the entire audience applauded.

Mike Foote motioned to approve the Resolution honoring Murdock Jemerson; Todd Scott seconded the motion; all committee members applauded in full support; the Resolution honoring Murdock Jemerson was unanimously approved and adopted.

Jim Hendricks motioned to approve the Resolution honoring Dr. Chuck Nelson; Marne Smiley seconded the motion; all committee members applauded in full support; the Resolution honoring Dr. Chuck Nelson was unanimously approved and adopted.

UPDATE ON URBAN OUTREACH INITIATIVES

Kevin Frailey, DNR Education Services Manager, gave an overview on what is in store for youth urban outreach initiatives this summer. Gary Williams, with MSU Extension in Detroit, schedules programs throughout the summer months in cooperation with the DNR Parks and Recreation Division, and is holding events at seven Michigan state parks and recreation areas this summer; to include Pontiac Lake, Maybury, Proud Lake, Hoffmaster, Muskegon, and Bay City State Parks, as well as Bald Mountain Recreation Area. Carl Lindell, the DNR Parks and Recreation Bay City District Supervisor, also works with the Flint Boys and Girls Clubs to get them involved in coming to the parks, and Sleepy Hollow State Park partners with the City of Lansing to get urban city youth in the outdoors.

Frailey further commented on the programs, which are about getting youth and families outside and into the parks. The programs provide youth and adults the opportunity to learn hunting, fishing and other outdoor recreation skills and, for some, get them to a state park for their very first time. The hope is that, once they experience the outdoors and learn some skills, it will attract them back to the parks, possibly attract future hunters, fishermen and other outdoor enthusiasts, and possibly spark an interest in working for the DNR. It also helps to reinforce the family bond. The program includes activities such as archery, fishing, camping, orienteering

and exploring nature. Education and Outreach also reaches out to kids through school programs year-round.

The committee raised several questions and offered varying ideas on ramping up this program in other urban communities, as well as getting over obstacles such as transportation, obtaining outdoor equipment, additional staff resources, and costs to offer these programs. Chief Olson commented that corporate sponsorships and partnerships play a key role in being able to offer these opportunities, such as Macy's department store, Gander Mountain, and Michigan libraries, in addition to the Take Me Fishing grants and donations from other sports dealers. He also commented that winter recreational opportunities is a whole new frontier and is on the list of possibilities for future programs.

Chair Coleman commended DNR and Parks and Recreation staff for their groundbreaking efforts, and for the innovative partnerships they have created to continue to offer these opportunities to urban youth and families. He asked the committee to submit additional ideas and suggestions to support these programs to Chief Olson and/or Kevin Frailey.

STATE FOREST CAMPGROUND OPERATION (LIME ISLAND)

DNR Forest Management Chief Lynne Boyd was present to discuss the status of state forest campground closures. Chief Boyd reported that the Director will be pulling the order to close 23 state forest campgrounds at the NRC's regular meeting later in the day. Instead, he has asked that Forest Management partner with Parks and Recreation to come up with a comprehensive plan by October 1, 2011, regarding the future of these state forest campgrounds, identifying which campgrounds should continue to be managed under the state forest system, those that could be managed under the state parks system, those that local units of government are interested in managing, and those that would be shut down. Chief Boyd commented that a workgroup will be established to develop this plan; however, in the meantime, they are reaching out to local units of government and partnering with Parks and Recreation to determine interest in running or managing any of the 23 state forest campgrounds on the list for possible closure.

Chair Coleman commented that this is a welcoming announcement. At the last NRC meeting, there was a lot of disappointment expressed by the public, especially users of these state forest campgrounds. He recognizes all the issues that go along with managing state forest campgrounds and appreciates the opportunity to continue to offer this unique camping experience to outdoor enthusiasts.

DNR Parks and Recreation Chief Ron Olson reported that the Parks and Recreation Division will be taking over management of Lime Island, and parks staff has already been visiting the island to assess future development and operation on the island. **Rich Hill, Straits District Supervisor**, commented the intent is to transition the island from the Forest Management Division, with the idea of operating Lime Island like a state recreation area and marketing it as an eco-tourism site. He commented that there are some infrastructure challenges; however, the island has six cabins that they could upgrade and put on the central reservation system to rent as rustic cabins with propane heat, an old school house that could be converted into a meeting location, a learning center or an overnight lodge with bedrooms, and a Victorian residence that could also be converted into a rental lodge. They are also looking at the possibility of installing environmentally friendly septic systems, offer platform tents or yurts as rentals, setting up a day use area with picnic tables and grills, and possibly renting out canoes and kayaks. They are also looking into purchasing or leasing a boat to transport visitors to/from the island.

Chief Olson further reported that a Land Use Order of the Director will be presented to Director Stokes for his approval, transferring administration of Lime Island to the Parks and Recreation Division, with immediate effect, so the island can be incorporated into the parks' rules and regulations, and in hopes of having the island up and running for the 2012 season.

Committee member Jim Bradley recommended holding this committee's next meeting, or a future meeting, on Lime Island. Chair Coleman said he would consider that possibility.

Vice Chair Mary Brown asked how much forest (timbering) area does the Forest Management Division stand to lose with this transfer. Chief Boyd responded that Lime Island is not a sustainable forest area and has not been actively forested or timbered so there is no loss.

Chief Olson closed by stating that Parks and Recreation will also be working with the Forest Management to identify any other state forest campgrounds that we may be interested in managing.

RESOLUTION AMENDING NAMING OF TRAVERSE CITY STATE PARK

Chief Olson reported that a proposal was put forward to acknowledge the recently retired Natural Resources Commission Chair Keith Charters for his many years of service, dedication and contributions to the Natural Resources Commission, the DNR, conservation, and the State of Michigan, by renaming Traverse City State Park in his honor. The NRC will address this proposal at their full committee meeting later in the day and, therefore, Chief Olson presented a Resolution in Support of Renaming Traverse City State Park the "**Keith J. Charters Traverse City State Park**," in perpetuity.

Commissioner John Madigan was present and commented that Keith Charters was the longest serving chair of the NRC, serving 16-18 years, in addition to continuing his seat on the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board. He further commented that Keith Charters led the DNR through some tough times, was a pioneer in recruitment and retention in the department, and always pressed the button on budget issues, all while keeping his constituencies in mind.

Chair Coleman also commented that it was because of Keith Charters' leadership that the first parks committee was established to specifically address issues relating to Michigan state parks. It was he who insisted that this committee continue as a functioning body under the Natural Resources Commission, after it was abolished by the Governor's Executive Order in 2009.

Chair Coleman read the Resolution that will be presented to the NRC and asked for a motion; **Mike Foote motioned in support of the Resolution; Jim Hendricks seconded the motion; all committee members were unanimously in support; the motion carried and was adopted by the full committee.** Chair Coleman will move the approved Resolution forward to the full NRC committee.

Chief Olson informed the committee that a formal dedication ceremony is planned for July 21, to take place at the Traverse City State Park Day Use area. All are invited to attend.

RECREATION PASSPORT UPDATES

Recreation Passport Participation Rate

Harold Herta, PRD Resource Management Section Chief, reported on the Recreation Passport participation rates and passports sold through the end of April, with a current participation rate of 23.8 percent. He also reported that locally sold passports are increasing, with 39,000 being sold in the state parks/recreation areas just this month alone. He further reported that we have far surpassed the minimum 17 percent rate, and are projecting to finish up this first year on target, with a goal of 24.3 percent of all eligible, registered Michigan vehicles and motorcycles. He also reported that day use is picking up in the parks daily, as the Recreation Passport now makes it more affordable for families to spend a day at the parks/beaches.

Herta further commented that Secretary of State Ruth Johnson was quoted in the Detroit Free Press, announcing that the 1 millionth Recreation Passport has been sold and they are continuing to sell. Chief Olson commented that Secretary of State Johnson also attended the Recreation 101 kick-off event held at the Holly Recreation Area on June 4, to show her support for outdoor recreation and the Recreation Passport, and she participated in the entire day's events.

Recreation Passport Grant Program

John Cherry, DNR Grants Management, reported that the deadline to apply for the first round of Recreation Passport grants ended on May 1. Fifty applications from varying locations around the state were received, with a total request just over \$1.2 million. Site visits will take place in June and July, the grant applications will then be scored, and recommendations will be presented to Director Stokes mid-October, with a final decision in November. The next round of Recreation Passport grant applications will be due April 1, 2012.

When asked what outreach efforts were made to educate and inform local units of government about the new Recreation Passport Grant program, Cherry replied that the department issued a press release announcing the program, information is posted on the DNR's web site, presentations were made at the Michigan Recreation and Park Association's (MRPA) annual conference in February, notices were sent to past grant recipients and applicants, and the MRPA continues to partner with the DNR on opportunities to present this information, and recently posted a three page article in their quarterly newsletter explaining the Recreation Passport and the grant program.

Chief Olson closed by commenting that he intends to pull together a planning committee to plan events to give symbolic big checks to the successful communities that are awarded a grant under the Recreation Passport program.

Recreation Passport Marketing

Maia Stephens and Jolene Priest, Recreational Programmers, gave a brief presentation on marketing goals and accomplishments, phase two marketing plans and features they are currently working on, including a new Secretary of State mailing insert and a 30-second video spot to be played at Secretary of State branch offices that have the capacity to show videos, thirteen Welcome Centers and on Cable Channel 7 to be shown on Mackinac Island via the Mackinac Island State Park Commission.

Committee member Bradley commented that staff should contact and partner with cable channels. Charter will run video at no charge in the Upper Peninsula. Other committee members also offered up ideas of places to contact, expressing an interest in reaching inner urban cities, the lower participating counties, and especially Wayne County.

Chair Coleman commended staff and encouraged them to continue the hard work, planning, and moving forward, but also encouraged them to reach out to members of this committee to help reach communities and constituencies in their respective areas/districts.

2011 NRPA NATIONAL GOLD MEDAL AWARD

Chief Olson reported that the DNR Parks and Recreation Division was chosen as one of the top four finalists to be considered for the National Recreation and Park Association's (NRPA) Gold Medal Award for the Recreation Passport. Staff will be preparing material, video footage, and other documentation to support the Recreation Passport in hopes of being considered at the October conference, where the winner will be chosen and announced.

Commissioner Tim Nichols had joined the meeting and commented that if the DNR is already in the running as one of the top four candidates in the nation, then we've already won. To be considered as one of the top four finalists out of 52 states, that is quite an accomplishment and something to be extremely proud of, regardless if we are chosen the winner in October or not.

Chair Coleman agreed and commended Chief Olson for his leadership and all parks staff for the hard work he has witnessed being put into, first, assisting this committee in getting to this point, and second, in continuing to market the Recreation Passport.

CLOSING COMMENTS

Commissioner Coleman asked the committee if they had any closing comments.

Committee member Jim Bradley reiterated that, as mentioned at the last meeting, he would like this committee to go back to the old format, where they are allowed to meet off-schedule and in the parks. He commented that this is a parks committee and, as such, should be allowed to meet outside of a structured one to two hours to meet at/visit parks so they can adequately address park-related issues. As a member that represents and travels from the far western Upper Peninsula, he cannot justify travel costs to come to Lansing for a one to two hour structured meeting where the committee is not allowed input, or allowed significant time to meet as a group and address park issues.

Chair Coleman agreed that this committee needs to get 'out of the office' and in the field/parks. As a parks committee, they should be more involved in the park planning process, as well as administrative issues, rules and regulations related to park management. Chair Coleman agreed to work with the NRC Chair and Chief Olson to get this committee out to the parks more often, and will follow up on the strong support to meet on Lime Island.

Commissioner Coleman announced that the next meeting is scheduled for August 11, 2011, and the location will be determined. If it is feasible to hold the meeting on Lime Island, he will work to schedule the meeting at that location.

Commissioner Coleman asked the committee if there were any more closing comments; none were offered. He asked for a motion to adjourn; ***Vice Chair Brown motioned to adjourn; Bradley seconded the motion; and the meeting adjourned at 11:50 a.m.***