

## **MINUTES**

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

October 13, 2011  
MSU Diagnostic Center, Room 101  
Lansing, Michigan

#### **PRESENT FOR THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION**

Hurley Coleman, Chair  
Mary Brown, Vice-Chair

#### **PRESENT FOR THE MSPAC**

Jim Bradley  
Chris Graham  
Jim Hendricks  
Robert Hoffmeyer  
Mike McDonald  
Mary Pitcher  
Bill Rose  
Kent Wood

#### **ABSENT**

Tom Ferguson  
Mike Foote  
Todd Scott  
Marne Smiley  
Janet Mansfield, Ex-Officio Member  
Duncan Wyeth, Ex-Officio Member

#### **OTHERS PRESENT**

Ardena Bosley, Flint/Genesee Job Corp

#### **MICHIGAN STATE PARKS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Chair Hurley Coleman, Jr.** called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m., with roll call and introductions around the room. Chair Coleman asked if any of the members had anything to add or adjust on the agenda. No alterations to the agenda were offered. Chair Coleman commented that Director Stokes sends his apologies for not being able to attend today's meeting as he had a Governor's Cabinet meeting.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None.

## APPROVAL OF AUGUST 11, 2011 MINUTES

Approval of the August 11, 2011, Minutes is postponed for review/approval at the December, 2011 meeting.

## MI STATE PARKS AND OUTDOOR RECREATION BLUE RIBBON PANEL

Chair Coleman introduced **Erin McDonough and Jon Allen, co-chairs of the Governor's recently appointed Blue Ribbon Panel on State Parks and Outdoor Recreation** ("Panel"). Erin gave a brief overview of her background as the Executive Director of the Michigan United Conservation Corp (MUCC) and how their organization is already a strong partner with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Erin explained this 17-member Panel was established under Governor's Executive Order 2011-10. The Panel has been established to work in partnership with the DNR Parks and Recreation Division and the NRC Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee ("Parks Committee") over the next twelve months to review the role of Michigan state parks, changing trends and the future vision for Michigan state parks, expansion, allocation, and linkages between state parks, county and local parks. Erin further explained that this panel has not been established to supersede the Parks Committee but, rather, work in conjunction with the Parks Committee to help link the initiatives of the Parks Committee into the local economy and show how Michigan state parks can help bolster Michigan's economy.

Jon gave a brief overview of his background as the Executive Director of Environmental Policy and Intergovernmental Affairs for Consumers Energy Company, and he also serves on the Environmental Advisory Council. He reiterated that their intent is to partner with DNR staff and the Parks Committee to talk about Michigan state parks as an investment vehicle and establish an investment strategy, especially in light of a growing endowment fund resulting from oil and gas lease sales and the first year's success of the new "Recreation Passport." He gave high praises to the Parks Committee for their efforts in getting this passed through the legislature. He further commented that the Panel will be looking at the economic, sociological and environmental value Michigan state parks have to offer, their connection to communities, the values they help reinforce in society and their attractiveness to further educational opportunities for youth populations. With constantly changing demographics and trends, the Panel and the Parks Committee need to look at the next five years, and what our park users will look like in the next fifty years.

Both co-chairs apologized for not being able to speak on behalf of the entire Panel at this time as they have not met as a group yet; however, this is their intent/vision and how they intend to frame the Panel. They addressed the Parks Committee by asking them how they feel they could partner with and make contributions to the Panel, or vice versa.

Chair Coleman commented that they were just made aware of the Executive Order and the establishment of this Panel literally a day before this meeting. He commented that his initial reaction was confusion; however, after reviewing the Executive Order and the members on the Panel, he realizes this will allow the Parks Committee the opportunity to elevate Michigan state parks to a higher level, and he hopes this will allow the opportunity for open, candid dialogue on the future of Michigan state parks, development and long-term goals.

Committee members commented on the struggles Michigan state parks have had since losing all general fund assistance, how this Committee worked for a couple of years developing the Recreation Passport, and take great pride in its success. However, there remains a lot to be

done, especially with deteriorating infrastructure and protecting these treasures well into the future.

**Committee member Bill Rose** commented that tourism plays a huge role in Michigan's economy. Michigan state parks are a key factor to the future success of tourism in this state; however, we also need to reach out and partner with the private sector, county and local parks. This Panel can help the Parks Committee do that. Bill recommends the Parks Committee set aside some time to brainstorm and make recommendations to the Panel, and possibly hold a couple joint meetings with the Panel. As the Executive Director of the Kalamazoo Nature Center, Bill believes Michigan state parks are a perfect place to provide educational opportunities by informing citizens, families, students and youth about natural areas, preservation, the environment, outdoor education, exercise, healthier lifestyles, and play a key role with "No Child Left Inside."

Chair Coleman recommended the Parks Committee make room on future agendas to have regular, interactive dialogue with the Panel, and receive regular updates from the co-chairs. Erin and Jon both agreed and gladly accepted the invitation/offer to attend meetings and provide updates on the Panel's review/progress. Erin also mentioned the Panel will be establishing a web site where Parks Committee members can remain up-to-date on meetings, locations and the Panel's progress. She also offered an open invitation to the Parks Committee to attend as many meetings as they can or as their schedules allow, and provide their thoughts and comments to the Panel, either individually or collectively, at any time.

**Natural Resources Commissioner Tim Nichols**, who also sits on the Panel, also offered to take things forward to the Panel, or provide updates to the Parks Committee on the Panel's discussions and progress.

### **ROCKPORT ADMINISTRATIVE TRANSFER FROM FOREST MANAGEMENT TO PARKS AND RECREATION**

**Ron Olson, DNR Parks and Recreation Chief**, gave a brief overview of when this Committee (*as the former Citizens Committee for Michigan State Parks*) held a public meeting on the future of Rockport and the public's desires for the area. A Resolution was later passed by the Citizens Committee in support of moving forward on an inclusive planning process with local communities, the City of Alpena, all stakeholders and the general public. The Negwegon, Rockport and Thompson's Harbor (NRTH) Advisory Committee was created in 2007 to engage with all stakeholders regarding future development plans for Rockport, and the NRTH Advisory Committee has now come up with a plan for development of the area.

**Paul Curtis, DNR Parks and Recreation**, gave an overview of the three properties adjoining each other, namely Negwegon State Park, Thompson's Harbor State Park and Rockport, as well as the multitude of recreational opportunities available in these three areas. Ron Olson commented that this will be the state park design of the future, offering opportunities for kayakers, boaters, geo-cachers, geologic and historic exploration, and much more multi-uses. It just depends on how dramatic and sophisticated we want to make the design, and if the cost of development will reap the benefits and create enough revenue to support the designs, improvements, structures, and activities. Initially, the plan is to pick up where Forest Management left off and hire minimal staff/park rangers until further developments can be made.

Chair Coleman asked that the MSPAC's Operations and Stewardship Subcommittee be included in discussions, dialogue and future plans for development of this area.

***Chris Graham motioned that the transfer of the Rockport property from Forest Management to Parks and Recreation be completed, and the Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee is in support of moving forward with future development plans for the Rockport area; Bill Rose seconded the motion; there were no objections; all members were in support and the motion unanimously carried.***

## RECREATION PASSPORT

### Amendment to Park Purchased Passport

Ron Olson reminded the committee that the Recreation Passport legislation allows the DNR to raise and double the fee for park-purchased passports, beginning with the second year of implementation. However, with the Recreation Passport being so new, DNR Parks and Recreation recommends not raising the fee for one more year to educate the public and allow them to gain a better understanding of the program and the requirements. Members of the Committee had felt strongly about enforcing the Recreation Passport in its second year, however, it is still new to a lot of people, with many still not aware of this new program. DNR Parks and Recreation recommends keeping the fee at \$10 (\$5 for motorcycles) in 2012, raising the fee \$5 for vehicles (\$2.50 for motorcycles) in 2013, and doubling the fee in 2014 for park-purchased Recreation Passports.

**Committee member, Mary Pitcher**, asked if the DNR has the authority to set and/or waive the Recreation Passport fee. Ron Olson replied that the DNR has the authority to set or raise fees via Director's Orders, and will waive the fee under certain circumstances that benefit the park, such as educational sessions or events that promote the parks. However, the DNR does not have the authority to change the fee on Recreation Passports sold through the Secretary of State, only those sold at the parks.

**Committee member, Chris Graham**, asked if we intend to educate the public about the consequences of not purchasing a Recreation Passport at time of vehicle/motorcycle plate renewal. Ron Olson responded that new materials/flyers are in the process of being created, that will be inserted with renewal forms, educating and warning the public about the fee increase and penalties.

After discussions regarding the request to hold off one more year before raising the fee on park-purchased Recreation Passports, Ron Olson asked for a motion to approve suspending the fee increase for another year. ***Jim Bradley motioned to delay actions previously approved by this Committee, suspending the fee increase for park-purchased Recreation Passports to 2013, and doubling the fee in 2014; Chris Graham seconded the motion; no objections were offered; and the motion unanimously carried.***

### Recreation Passport Participation Rate/Year End Status Report

**Harold Herta, DNR Parks and Recreation**, gave a year-end closing report on the Recreation Passport. Bottom line is the Recreation Passport participation rate came out better than initially anticipated or projected. The initial goal was a 24.3% participation rate for the period ending September 30, 2011. Combining Recreation Passports sold through the Secretary of State with

passports sold at the parks, the combined overall participation rate for the first year was 24.7%, 0.4% above the goal.

The first round of Recreation Passport grants totals \$614,127. The successful grant recipients will be presented to the Director in October, with action/approval anticipated in November, and the issuance of grants in December. This Committee will be notified as soon as the grants are approved, along with a list of grant award ceremonies (big check presentations) taking place with the local communities. Committee members are invited, and encouraged, to attend the Recreation Passport grants being presented to local communities in their immediate areas.

## **UBRAN OUTREACH INITIATIVES OVERVIEW**

**Keith Frailey, DNR Marketing and Outreach**, gave a presentation/overview regarding all the urban outreach/outdoor clinics held this summer. Most of the programs focus on getting youth groups and inner-city youth out to the parks in the summer, which is slightly different than their winter programs, when staff present in the classrooms. The partnership with the Flint Boys and Girls Club is also slightly different. It is a special model of providing progressive pathways by offering repeated visits to different park settings and a secondary level of outdoor experiences requiring additional skill. Children visit the park for their very first time, then they get them to come back to the parks a few more times for repeat exposure while increasing their experiences and education of outdoor programs. Ages span from 8 to 14 years old; however, they do have groups with children ranging younger or older, and they also host family groups.

**Carl Lindell, PRD Bay City District Supervisor**, introduced Ardena Bosley, who runs the Flint/Genesee Job Corp. She gave an overview of their programs. Their primary goal is to create a new level of users and, hopefully, interest them in outdoor recreational education/jobs. They introduce employment opportunities for trainees to work in the DNR, and they are working towards curriculums for career opportunities in the DNR and the natural resources field. The Flint/Genesee Job Corp is working towards forming a collaboration and bridge with the DNR in developing curriculum where students can work more closely with parks, get them out in the parks, and seek a career in Michigan state parks.

Chair Coleman commended staff. He had the opportunity to see the benefits of these programs this season and appreciates the work staff continue to do with the youth in this state.

## **SPRAY BY THE BAY/FRIENDS OF BAY CITY STATE RECREATION AREA**

Carl Lindell gave a brief overview of the numerous fund raising efforts by the Friends of the Bay City State Recreation Area, the funds they have raised and the monetary donations made towards the development of the Spray by the Bay Spray Park, the Play by the Bay playscape, and the Tobico Marsh Observation Tower restorations. Friends of the Bay City State Recreation Area received the 2011 National Association of State Park Directors "Presidents Award" for their donations to the Bay City State Recreation Area.

## **CLOSING COMMENTS**

Committee member, Jim Bradley, reiterated that, once again, we had more on the agenda than time. It commented that it is difficult for members to be enthusiastic about the work this Committee should be doing with Michigan state parks with only 1 to 2 hours, every other month, to get together, and no opportunity to visit the parks, engage in in-depth discussions and address issues related to Michigan's state parks and recreation areas. He recommends going

back to the way this Committee ran and met before, when they were the Citizens Committee for Michigan State Parks, by meeting at and getting out to the parks.

Chair Coleman agreed and asked the Committee to come up with recommendations that he can take to the NRC Chair on how this Committee would like to move forward in 2012. He agrees that this Committee needs more time to collaborate on issues, and they need to get out to the parks. Chair Coleman is open to changing the meeting format in 2012 and, therefore, asks that recommendations/proposals be brought to the table at the December meeting.

Chair Coleman also asked Ron Olson to work with the Blue Ribbon Panel to coordinate/arrange a few joint/special meetings between the two committees.

Chair Coleman asked for a motion to adjourn. ***Chris Graham motioned to adjourn; Mary Pitcher seconded the motion; and the meeting was adjourned at 11:00 a.m.***