

## MINUTES

### NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

January 12, 2012

Diagnostic Center for Population and Animal Health  
4125 Beaumont Road  
Lansing, MI 48910

#### Present for the Natural Resources Commission (NRC)

Timothy L. Nichols, Chair  
Frank Wheatlake, Vice Chair  
John Madigan  
John Matonich  
J.R. Richardson  
Rex Schlaybaugh

#### PRESENT FOR STAFF

Rodney Stokes, Director, Department of Natural Resources  
Debbie Whipple, Executive Assistant to the Natural Resources Commission  
Stacy Welling, Upper Peninsula Regional Coordinator  
Peter Manning Legal Counsel, Office of the Attorney General  
Other Department staff

#### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

**Chairman Tim Nichols** called the Committee of the Whole meeting to order at 3 p.m. He thanked past commissioners **Hurley J. Coleman** and **Mary C. Brown** (who were not present) for their years of service and effort on the Natural Resources Commission and for their knowledge and expertise they shared with other commission members and constituents. (Coleman's and Brown's commissions expired December 31, 2011.) **Nichols** announced that Governor Snyder appointed two new members to the commission January 5, 2012, and welcomed new commissioner **Rex E. Schlaybaugh, Jr.** of Birmingham who was present. New commissioner **Annoesjka Steinman** of Grand Rapids was unable to attend the January meeting but will begin her duties at the February 9, 2012, commission meeting.

#### DIRECTOR'S REPORTS

**Director Stokes** said he is looking forward to a great 2012 for the department and called on **Jim Dexter**, acting chief of the DNR Fisheries Division, to start the meeting with an update on the aquatic invasive species management plan.

### **Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) State Management Plan**

Acting chief of the DNR Fisheries Division **Jim Dexter** introduced **Sarah Lesage**, aquatic biologist and aquatic invasive species program coordinator with the Department of Environmental Quality Water Resources Division, who gave an overview and update on the state's current efforts in drafting an aquatic species management plan. **Lesage** reported that the first draft of the updated plan has been compiled by state agency staff and managers, and it is currently being reviewed through February, 2012, by staff and managers in the departments of Environmental Quality, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Rural Development, and Transportation. **Lesage** said following a review process, a final plan will be drafted for submission to the ANS Task Force (an intergovernmental organization co-chaired by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Oceanic and atmospheric Administration) for approval, likely in the summer of 2012.

### **Wolf Delisting Update**

DNR Wildlife Division Chief **Russ Mason** gave a brief update on the delisting of wolves, reporting that Wednesday, December 28, 2011, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service published a final rule to delist wolves in the western Great Lakes, which will return the management of wolves to state authorities in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan Friday, January 27, 2012. **Mason** said that Michigan has a very strong and consensually developed wolf plan that dictates what the state will do once wolves are returned to state authority. The plan was developed by a group of stakeholders, citizens in the state of Michigan representing broad interests, and guidelines are currently being drafted. **Mason** disclosed that citizens will have the ability to protect their private property when they have legitimate concerns but made it very clear that wolves remain a non-game species in the state and continue to have a protected status. He said there is no season on wolves in Michigan and that it is up to the state Legislature if that status is to be changed. **Mason** concluded by saying that both the state and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will monitor the situation of wolf population over the next five years.

### **Russ Mason Professional Award of Merit**

**Director Stokes** announced that DNR Wildlife Division Chief **Russ Mason** was honored December 5, 2011, with the Professional Award of Merit from the North Central Section of the Wildlife Society, a professional, international, nonprofit, scientific and educational association dedicated to excellence in wildlife stewardship through science and education. **Stokes** conveyed that the award is bestowed for outstanding professional accomplishments in wildlife conservation and is given only in those years in which a truly deserving candidate is available. He said **Mason** has made a lasting and deeply significant contribution to professional wildlife conservation and extended congratulations from the whole department to Chief **Mason**.

### **Blueberry Ridge Pathway Recommendations**

**Director Stokes** announced that upon review of staff recommendations, public testimony, and consultation with the Natural Resources Commission, he will not make any changes to the land use order for the Blueberry Ridge Pathway. **Stokes** said the trail will remain open to non-motorized uses, excluding equestrian and bicycling. The ban on equestrian and bicycling use on the pathway shall continue.

### **DNR Strategic Plan**

**Director Stokes** announced that he will lead an effort in a Department of Natural Resources strategic planning process in 2012. He said the strategic plan will be the blueprint for guiding the department into the future and indicated that he intends to link the plan to the department's budget and that it will contain metrics to measure the DNR's performance. **Stokes** said the environment in which the DNR operates is dramatically changing, and the way things were done in the past will not be acceptable in the future. Additional details regarding the strategic planning effort will be announced at the February NRC meeting.

### **Office of the Inspector General Federal Audit**

**Sharon Schafer**, chief of the DNR Finance and Operations Division, gave details on an audit report released January 6, 2012, by the Office of the Inspector General, which covers grant awards from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service under the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources from October 1, 2008, through September 30, 2010. **Schafer** said the audit summary concluded that the department complied, in general, with applicable grant agreement provisions and requirements of the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration acts, regulations, and Fish and Wildlife Service guidelines. **Schafer** reported there were, however, five conditions that resulted in findings. She said a corrective action plan will be developed in partnership with the Fish and Wildlife Service to reach mutually acceptable solutions.

### **Legislative Update**

**Gary Owen**, DNR Legislative Liaison, reported that the only legislative activity since the December 8, 2011, NRC meeting was on House Bill 4298 (Rep. Steven Lindberg), which was signed by Governor Snyder in late December with immediate effect. The legislation revises the policy for granting easements across state-owned land. **Owen** also submitted a written legislative report.

**Chairman Nichols adjourned the Committee of the Whole at 3:50 p.m. and called for public appearances.**

## **PUBLIC APPEARANCES**

**Amy Trotter** of Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC) said she is pleased the department is moving forward with developing the mentored youth hunting program since it's been a major policy initiative for MUCC in 2010 and 2011. She said MUCC is happy to be a partner in disseminating guidelines and communications as they are established. **Trotter** said she was also pleased to see the announcement and survey on hunting and fishing guidelines and appreciated the comments from Director Stokes, particularly about customer service.

**Dale Hendershot**, public relations director of the Michigan Trappers and Predator Callers Association (MTPCA) and a hunter safety instructor, advised that the MTPCA supports the mentored youth hunting program. He thanked **Commissioner Matonich** and the workgroup for the hard work in developing the program and thinks it's heading in the right direction.

**Ed Spinazzola** of Macomb County talked about deer management. He thanked commissioners for making some bold moves in managing Michigan's deer herd to be more natural in their adult sex ratio and age structure. He said the 12 county northwest area buck management proposal should be viewed as a major deer research program and approved by the commission. He urged commissioners to continue the progressive action and pass the proposal as true deer research and suggested using the present 50,000 surveys issued each year to gather buck management information.

**Therese Kline**, Michigan Horse Council Trails chairperson, offered a seven-page document that lists positive interactions between the DNR and the Michigan equestrian trail-riding community in 2011. **Kline** said that many in the equestrian community feel that the positive interactions have increased significantly in the past 18 months and thanked Director Stokes, members of the NRC, and all DNR personnel for their hard work in making that happen.

**Dave Southworth**, president of Five Lakes Association, spoke regarding a devastating invasive variable leaf milfoil that was confirmed to have been brought into Five Lakes, located three miles north of Clare, on propellers, anchors and under carriages of boats launched through the DNR public boat launch in the spring and summer of 2011.

**Southworth** said the association would like help in saving the lakes from the invasion and would like to assume ownership of the boat launch. **Commissioner Wheatlake** asked what assuming ownership would accomplish since it couldn't preclude people from fishing. **Southworth** said they would like to see a filtration unit placed next to or into the concrete slab that goes into the lake and a boat-washing system installed.

**Director Stokes** commented that the public must continue to have access to the boat launch. **Stokes** asked **Ron Olson**, chief of the DNR's Parks and Recreation Division to contact Mr. Southworth to further discuss the issue.

**Emily Caretti**, youth member of the Mentored Youth Hunt Program Workgroup, in response to negative comments about the mentored youth hunt, said the program isn't about getting more money for the state, it's about hunter retention to preserve hunter heritage in the state of Michigan.

**John Caretti**, president of the Michigan Trappers and Predator Callers Association, spoke in favor of the mentored youth hunt program. In addressing the issue of safety, he thinks early involvement and education is what makes the woods safer.

**Dean Hall**, president of Michigan Bow Hunters Association and a hunter safety instructor, said the association supports the mentored youth hunt. Member of the association also feel safety classes are an important part once youth are interested.

**Chauncey Moran** of the Upper Peninsula conveyed his son Jeremiah's appreciation for those who have made the mentored youth hunt program a reality and for giving youth an opportunity to hunt. He said he and his son are grateful for the Department of Natural Resources and the Natural Resources Commission for their participation. He asked that the DNR challenge the manufacturers of firearms to get on board and provide a safe avenue for young people to be involved in the sport of hunting by providing firearms that fit them.

**Dawn Levey**, MUCC statewide vice president and a hunter safety instructor, thanked the DNR/NRC and thinks the Mentored Youth Hunt Program is a major step forward and a positive step forward to get youth out into the woods.

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**Chairman Nichols adjourned the public appearances portion of the meeting and called the regular meeting to order at 4:38 p.m. He noted that all members who were initially in attendance are currently present for the regular meeting.**

#### **FOR INFORMATION ONLY – NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION**

**Chairman Nichols** listed the NRC's *For Information Only* item as:

- Mentored Youth Hunting Program  
Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 2 of 2012

#### **NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION ACTION ITEMS**

##### **Approval of Minutes, December 8, 2011, NRC Meeting**

**Commissioner Madigan** made a motion, supported by **Commissioner Matonich**, that minutes of the December 8, 2011, NRC meeting be approved. Motion carried, with **Commissioner Wheatlake** abstaining since he was not present at the December 8 meeting.

**Commissioner Madigan** made a motion that the Amendment to Falconry Regulations, Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 1 of 2012, be adopted. **Commissioner Richardson** seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

### **FOR INFORMATION ONLY – DIRECTOR**

**Director Stokes** listed the Director's *For Information Only* item as:

- State Licensed Commercial Fishing (FO-243)

### **DIRECTOR'S ACTION ITEMS**

**Director Stokes** indicated he will sign all Director's action items for January, including Fisheries Order 240 (Sturgeon Regulations – Statewide); Fisheries Order 204 (Spawning Closures); all land transactions; and oil and gas lease auction.

**Commissioner Madigan** complimented the DNR Fisheries Division for the compromise and development of fishing regulations in order to keep the sturgeon season open on Black Lake this year.

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

#### **NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries**

**Commissioner Madigan**, chairman of the NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries, reported that Fisheries Division gave an update on the brook trout regulations in the Upper Peninsula as well as pike and muskie regulations, and updates on Fisheries Orders 243, 204 and 240; DNR Wildlife Division Chief Mason gave a report that Pure Michigan Hunt applications were up about 25 percent to 11,000 people; an update on the elk season was given, which indicated an estimated harvest of 142 and actual harvest of 131; there was discussion on the mentored youth hunt program.

**Commissioner Madigan** presented for approval the **2012 calendar of issues for the NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries**. There being no objections, the calendar was approved.

### **COMMISSIONER REPORTS**

**Commissioner Wheatlake** announced that the NRC Policy Committee on Finance and Administration will convene at the March 8 NRC meeting, which will give the governor an opportunity to present the budget. **Sharon Schafer**, chief of the DNR Finance and Operations Division will be asked to appear explain the overall budget process, including appropriations, where our funds come from, and investment policies.

**Commissioner Matonich** reported that he attended the Maple River Coop deer-aging event with Director Stokes, Chairman Nichols, Wildlife Chief Russ Mason and a number of other DNR staff members. Matonich indicated there were approximately 225-250 people present at the event.

**Commissioner Richardson** indicated that the newly formed Timber Advisory Council, of which he is chairman, will meet in March.

**Chairman Nichols** echoed the comments of Commissioner Matonich regarding the Maple River deer-aging event, adding there was phenomenal cooperation among the hunters, farmers, DNR staff members and all involved.

**Nichols** also announced that the next regular meeting of the commission is scheduled for Thursday, February 9, 2012, at the Hyatt Regency in Dearborn, in conjunction with the Michigan Recreation and Parks Association (MRPA) conference and trade show. There also will be a session the afternoon of Wednesday, February 8 where a history of the NRC will be presented along with information on the role of the commission. Subcommittees meeting are the NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries and the Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee.

**Commissioner Wheatlake** made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by **Commissioner Richardson** and unanimously passed. The regular meeting of the NRC was adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

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APPROVED:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Timothy Nichols, Chair

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Rodney A. Stokes, Director