

Western Upper Peninsula Citizen Advisory Council

Meeting Minutes

Monday, November 8, 2010

6:30-8:30 p.m. EST (5:30-7:30 CST)

Ford Center, 21030 US 41, Alberta

Council Members Present:

Donald Britton
Marcy Cella
Floyd Dropps
Shawn Hagan
Fred "Mick" Jarvi
Lorana Jinkerson
David Johnson
Martin Johnson
George Lindquist
Rory Mattson
G. Dale McNamee
Chauncey Moran
James Schmierer
Robert "Skip" Schulz
Warren Suchovsky
Philip Wirtanen

Council Members Absent:

David Anderson
Robert Black
Dennis Stachewicz, Jr.

Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DNRE) Staff Liaisons:

Stacy Welling, Upper Peninsula (UP) Regional Director, Marquette
Craig Albright, Wildlife Division, Escanaba
Debbie Munson Badini, Communications Representative, Marquette
Brian Brady, Air Quality Division, Gwinn
Clif Clark, Remediation Division, Gwinn
Cary Gustafson, Water Division, Crystal Falls
John Gustafson, Water Division, Gwinn
Rich Hill, Recreation Division, Marquette
Joe Maki, Office of Geological Survey, Gwinn
Don Mankee, Forest Management Division (FMD), Baraga
Conservation Officer Dave Miller, Law Enforcement Division (LED), Baraga
Jessica Mistak, Fisheries Division, Escanaba
Penny Bacon, Executive Division, Marquette

The Western Upper Peninsula (WUP) Citizen Advisory Council (CAC) meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. (EST) by Facilitator **Warren Suchovsky**.

Adoption of the Agenda:

Marcy Cella made a motion to adopt the agenda. **Jim Schmierer** supported the motion. Ayes: All. Nays: None. Motion carried.

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes:

Marcy Cella made a motion to approve the September 28, 2010 meeting minutes as amended. **Skip Schulz** supported the motion. Ayes: All. Nays: None. Motion carried.

Public Comment:

Brenda Turunen said she and her husband own a farm in Baraga County where they raise Russian boars. **Ms. Turunen** said if feral swine are declared an invasive species they will be out of business as hogs are 85 percent of their business. **Commissioner J. R. Richardson** said a work group was formed and the work group brought information to the November NRC meeting. He added the Director will make a decision at the December meeting whether feral swine is declared an invasive species. Discussion followed.

Dan Perotti asked the status of delisting the wolf. **Craig Albright** said on September 14, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service acted on a petition that was filled by Minnesota and Wisconsin to consider delisting the wolf. That started a 90 day fact finding process. By November 14 they will conclude their investigation and on December 14 they will make a decision on whether the delisting process is warranted or not. At that point a 60 day public comment period will begin. The earliest the wolves could be delisted June 2011. Discussion followed.

Reports: Stacy Welling, UP Regional Director noted the handout provided by Joe Maki on nonferrous metallic mineral mining regulations. Stacy said the deadline for staff to file for early retirement was Friday, November 5. This will have an impact on state government as the proposal is to replace half of the people retiring. Stacy added almost 900 DNRE employees are eligible to retire but she doesn't have the final numbers of employees retiring. **Rory Mattson** said the DNRE budget for 2011 shows there are 3,712 employees. Discussion followed on the number of DNRE employees. Rory would like to know the number of DNRE employees.

Special Presentation: DNRE and Delta County Soil and Water Conservation District Partnership Projects: Habitat Project and Permitting Pilot Project – Rory Mattson, Craig Albright and John Gustafson

Rory Mattson said the Delta County Conservation District submitted a proposal for a pilot project to work with private land owners. The Conservation District hired Shawn Cannon and Rory said, so far Shawn has conducted 281 site visits with private landowners in the south central UP. He added for fiscal year 2010, Shawn and Craig developed 36 land assessments for private landowners. Rory said the money for the program was provided by federal funds, the deer range improvement fund, and local wildlife groups.

Craig Albright said it's a level of service that Wildlife Division couldn't provide. The partnership with the Conservation District and Natural Resources Conservation Services has really paid off because Shawn Cannon is dedicated to help the private landowner. Shawn not only meets with the land owner but also provides them with an assessment to improve their land.

Rory Mattson said three entities were authorized to participate in a pilot program to aid with local wetland assistance, one of which is the Delta County Conservation District. Since signing the MOU, they've been on 94 site visits and found 14 violations that were given to the DNRE. Rory said in March they held an informational session at Bay College in Escanaba, followed by a workshop in June, and in August they held a classroom and on-site session. Rory said the pilot program has been very positive for Delta County.

John Gustafson said the meeting at Bay College was well attended and it opened a dialogue with people who probably wouldn't have contacted the Department. John said Rory assists the landowner with the application process but the Department is in charge of the regulatory enforcement and processing the permit application; and makes the permit decision and deals with the compliance issues. A report must be sent to the Wetland Advisory Council which was formed by the same statute that created the pilot project. John added that he will share that report with the Council

Old Business: **Dale McNamee** said he doesn't agree with Mindy Koch's statement that personnel issues are none of the Council's business. Dale said best management of the resources is within the scope of this Council and the Council can request and expect to get answers. An employee was terminated; the Council should know the facts of all parties so they can judge the effects upon the management of the resources. Dale said he doesn't support the Brule River habitat project and the opposition was well founded. Even though there was opposition to the tree drop on the Brule River and there were requests for the \$100,000 provided by WE Energies to be spent on more meaningful improvements for fish habitat, the individuals involved carried out this project. Dale is requesting the WUP-CAC file a formal request for investigation into these matters. No motion was made.

Stacy Welling said Mindy Koch was very clear that we can not discuss specific personnel issues. **Rory Mattson** said the Council represents the citizens and the citizens are requesting information. **Warren Suckovsky** said he feels this falls under the open meetings act.

Floyd Dropps said in his opinion that planting all of the walleye in Bays de Noc for seven years, as stated in the walleye plan, is not looking after the resources of Michigan; that's looking after one body of water. He said the Fisheries study shows there is sufficient walleye fingerling production in Little Bay de Noc and it also indicated there isn't any return on their efforts in Big Bay de Noc. **Stacy Welling** said we've had several meetings, telephone conversations and had a meeting scheduled on Friday but you decided to wait. Stacy said they moved the walleye plan date up by a year. Floyd thinks it's been a systematic approach to get rid of fisheries in Crystal Falls; first they eliminated the walleye production, then reduced the number of employees and now are possibly closing the office. Stacy said employees are retiring.

Jessica Mistak said the tree drop on the Brule River was a project funded by WE Energies as part of mitigation for their hydro projects. There is misinformation on the project; Jessica said she would be happy to provide the Council with information on the project or as an agenda item at a future meeting. Jessica said as far as personnel issues, we've been told by our Human Resources Division that certain employee information is protected by law. Even if we had the information we wouldn't be allowed to reveal it.

Jessica said they are working through the concerns about Bays de Noc. Before VHS, when they were at full capacity to rear walleye, both Bays de Noc and inland lakes were stocked. With their walleye plan, they hope to have their rearing ponds and manage those with cooperation from volunteer groups, such as Wildlife Unlimited, to have the ability to stock priority walleye lakes.

Jessica said the Fisheries Division management team is discussing how to keep the Crystal Falls office open. There are six fisheries technicians in the whole UP. Jessica said they can't send a crew out with less than three people; it doesn't make sense to keep just one employee in an office. Anytime an employee retires in any division in the Department we must review staffing plans. Floyd said he is looking for some kind of commitment to the resources of Iron

and Dickinson counties. Jessica said they need to continue their responsibilities for the whole UP. They are looking at creative options and still get the job done in the best way possible.

Jessica encouraged Council members to call her for more specific information, or she would be happy to provide a write-up or this could be an agenda item. She said it's difficult to bring this up at a meeting and have time to discuss it fully. Dale suggested consulting with them before doing something versus after doing it. Warren said the Council has a fish committee to work on these issues outside of the Council meetings.

New Business: Stacy Welling said the Department has a volunteer policy and provided a handout on the policy. The DNRE encourages volunteer participation from individuals, groups, companies and organizations; both community and civic; in various programs managed by the DNRE, within applicable labor contract language. Stacy said we need volunteers to partner with us to get the job done. **Jessica Mistak** said because of the various union representations within state government we are limited as to what and how we can use volunteers. It took a long time for the Department and union representatives to agree on the volunteer policy. **Commissioner Richardson** said as a Council you may want to ask to see the priorities of the fisheries program and then ask how can we help, how can we volunteer, how can we be involved. He said that may be a more progressive way to approach it. Jessica added this is a section in their walleye plan and she is hoping to have it on the agenda in February. **Rich Hill** said the process starts with an application and it's submitted to Human Resources for approval of a project or an on-going project like "Friends of the Porkies." The volunteers are also required to sign a liability waiver form.

Policy Regarding Staff Field Time: Rory Mattson asked if the Department has a written policy for every division regarding field staff time. Rory said wildlife groups are requesting this information because they are seeing less field staff and less time being spent on the resource but the budget remains the same. Discussion followed on a clear definition of Rory's request; from division mission statements, to position descriptions, to division work plans. Rory said he would like a breakdown of how time is spent in the field on the resources. **Warren Suchovsky** said he thinks the citizens want to have input as the Divisions develop their work plans to help prioritize rather than after they're implemented.

Council Member's Reflections about Deer:

Warren Suchovsky said there are people responsible for managing our resources that are very concerned there are too many deer in parts of Michigan. The key to a healthy forest is management and to manage the wildlife. Hunting and fishing brings in money but what does it cost when ecological areas are lost because of the impact from fisheries and wildlife management. Warren added the resources need to be managed to be productive and healthy.

Lorana Jinkerson said she had no comment but she likes deer.

Shawn Hagan said on the property they manage in Iron County they have a deer browse problem. Shawn wanted to provide the public with the opportunity to take additional antlerless deer off commercial forest land but those permits must be included into the antlerless tags for that particular unit or Shawn has to buy the tags and monitor the program. Shawn said he doesn't have the staff to monitor that type of program but yet it has a big impact on their resource. They don't want to see zero deer but there is a threshold. Shawn said when it comes to habitat the deer numbers need to be reduced to let the habitat come back.

Mick Jarvi said in the Keweenaw the winter takes care of the deer, they have summer range but they don't have winter deer yards. The deer migrate along the lakeshore but they are losing the lakeshore to private landowners. Mick said a better habitat needs to be created with the land we have.

Floyd Dropps said some hunters only want to shoot a trophy deer, some want to shoot venison for the table and some are in between. Floyd said we've lost the camaraderie and we aren't sharing that with our youth or bringing in new people. We need to enjoy the hunt and get back to traditions.

Dave Johnson agrees that the browse line in some areas indicate there may have been too many deer at one time. On the other hand too many deer is a good revenue source from non-residents. For the residents who live here and pay taxes, they should have the opportunity to hunt at a reasonable price.

Chauncey Moran said it would be great to have a program to educate school kids about habitat and deer. It's about habitat, scouting, and being optimistic. We need to take care of the watershed to have a healthy forest.

Marty Johnson said for the sportsmen to participate you need to have a product but the product is going downhill. We need to educate our youth on habitat improvement and to encourage the cooperate world to improve their conservation practices of the UP logging industry.

Jim Schmierer said he worries about the impact of managing the forest resource especially when local population levels are potentially impacting long term sustainability of that resource. With the level of private land ownership across the UP, it's a challenge but perhaps an opportunity to partner in ecosystem management to get meaningful resolution of these issues. Jim thinks there is a lot of expertise available but also challenges including demographic shifts and there needs to be a solid base of people that have the same care and same interests in the resources.

Marcy Cella was happy Commissioner Richardson changed his mind about crossbows. Marcy encouraged everyone to purchase a small game license to shoot a coyote while deer hunting.

Skip Schulz said he doesn't think that every deer or wolf should be killed. Skip said his organization is heavily involved with getting kids outdoors.

Rory Mattson said the Regional Deer Advisory Teams (RDAT's) should meet more than twice a year. He said the youth hunt could address high deer population areas. He said hunters want quite a few deer on the landscape but they also want habitat. Through the RDAT's there needs to be public meetings and through the majority decide how to manage deer.

Dale McNamee said there are probably too many deer in some areas. In north Menominee County, there are less deer than 10 years ago but Dale said there are still too many deer in his hardwoods. Dale said some of the land managers are planting mesic conifers which are causing the deer to migrate to his land.

Phil Wirtanen said life was simpler years ago, you bought a license, sometimes your area allowed antlerless hunting, it was at your discretion what size buck you shot, and a second buck

tag could be purchased. Now the rules are too complex. Phil said simplicity should be the primary objective.

George Lindquist said deer are moving to other areas due to the loss of habitat and the way some of the forest land is being managed. He said they aren't asking for more deer they are asking for management. The former combination license encouraged hunters to shoot the first buck they saw. George said organizations want a stable resource with different age classes. George added improving the quality of the product will increase sales and hunter satisfaction.

Don Britton said he is not a deer hunter but simplicity of rules should be number one.

Council Membership: Stacy Welling said according to the bylaws, membership is on two and four year rotating terms. Some Council members have reapplied for membership and for some members, this is their last meeting. The selection committee will meet in two weeks to select the new members.

Stacy Welling presented the Council members that served a two year term with a certificate of appreciation. Dave Anderson, Marcy Cella, Shawn Hagan, Lorana Jinkerson, Marty Johnson, Rory Mattson, Chauncey Moran, Jim Schmierer, Dennis Stachewicz and Phil Wirtanen. Stacy thanked the Council members for volunteering and for serving on the Council.

Next meeting: The next meeting will be held in Iron County on Monday, January 24, 2011, the meeting location will be determined.

- At the January 2011 meeting establish meeting dates for 2011 and 2012
- For the joint meeting in March, tentative agenda topics will include invasive species and deer management.

Council Members Closing Comments:

Warren Suchovsky said early next year there will be public meetings in the UP on biodiversity stewardship areas (BSA's).

Dave Johnson said the walleye issue is important to Dickinson and Iron counties since they don't border the Great Lakes, they want inland lakes stocked. Dave added when the subcommittee meets, they need the opportunity to bring the information to the Council.

Skip Schulz said the moose crossing signs are great but for three years his organization has been trying to get ORV crossing signs. **Stacy Welling** said the Department isn't in charge of putting up the signs.

Commissioner Richardson said these Council meetings are invaluable, he hears the different opinions at the ground level and he brings the information downstate. Commissioner Richardson said these Councils make a difference and he appreciates their time and dedication.

Rory Mattson thanked Commissioner Richardson and said it's been nice having two Commissioners from the UP. He said there are a lot of groups working on their reappointment.

Marcy Cella said she has made accomplishments behind the scenes by being on the Council.

Shawn Hagan said the BSA meetings will probably take place in February or March. Shawn said this is his last CAC meeting and he's appreciated all of the input and discussion over the last few years.

Lorana Jinkerson said this is her last meeting. She added it has been an honor to be here and she has learned a lot from serving on the Council.

Warren Suchovsky said the Council needs to encourage the new Governor to go back to the Commission system to give us real oversight of these programs.

Meeting adjourned at 9:08 p.m.

<p style="text-align:center">Western Upper Peninsula Citizen Advisory Council DNRE Division Reports 6:00-6:30 p.m. (EST) 5:00-5:30 p.m. (CST)</p>
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DNRE written staff reports were provided to the Council members on November 1, 2010. The following staff reports are current updates since the written reports.

Stacy Welling, UP Regional Director said Director Rebecca Humphries has resigned and has taken a position with Ducks Unlimited in Michigan effective January 1, 2011. Stacy welcomed Natural Resource Commissioner J.R. Richardson to the CAC meeting. The feral swine topic was on the NRC agenda for information only at the November meeting and for action at the December NRC meeting.

Brian Brady, Air Quality Division said he had nothing new to add to his written report.

Jessica Mistak, Fisheries Division, said she started as the northern Lake Michigan supervisor on November 1. Jessica said staff is finishing field work, working on survey reports, fish stocking prescriptions and work planning efforts for next year.

Don Mankee, Baraga Unit Manager, Forest Management Division said he is here tonight on behalf of Debbie Begalle. Don said staff is currently working on a brush fire north of Calumet. Don said things are moving well on the stumpage side.

Conservation Officer (CO) Dave Miller, Baraga County said he is here tonight on behalf of Lt. Tim Robson. In the past month, all CO's went through a firearm training program. The training was provided through a grant. Also, all of the officers have completed taser training and now have tasers. Officers are very busy with the fall hunting seasons and working on complaints.

Debbie Munson Badini, Communications Representative said this Saturday, Media Meet will air an interview with Director Humphries on Public TV 13 and public radio. Debbie encouraged everyone to check out the DNRE Facebook page.

Rich Hill, Recreation Division said staff is winterizing parks and wrapping up construction projects. **George Lindquist** suggested something more than a "p" on the license plate sticker perhaps something more distinctive showing support. **Lorana Jinkerson** said she purchased a new vehicle but the car dealer didn't know about the recreation passport. **Rich Hill** said the car dealerships want to include the recreation passports but unfortunately the Secretary of State's current computer system doesn't have the ability to include it. Rich said they are working on it.

Clif Clark, Remediation Division said he had nothing new to add to his written report.

Cary Gustafson, Water Resource Division said he had nothing new to add to his written report.

Craig Albright, Wildlife Division wished everybody a happy and successful firearm deer season.

Stacy Welling reported there have been several car / moose accidents that have happened in the same locations. Department staff is working with MDOT on signage in those areas. Stacy said the signs are very costly. In some cases, people remove the signs and in turn endanger people's lives. Stacy said please help spread the word not to take the signs.