

Western Upper Peninsula Citizen Advisory Council (WUPCAC)

Meeting Minutes

Monday, January 12, 2015

5:30-6:00pm EST DNR Division Reports * 6:00-8:00pm EST Council Meeting

Baraga Lakeside Inn Conference Room, Baraga, MI

Facilitator: Phil Wirtanen Co-Facilitator: Warren Suchovsky

Council Members Present

David Anthony

Ken Buchholtz

A.J. Campbell

Floyd Dropps

Joan Duncan

Larry Heathman

Mike Holmes

Mick Jarvi

Dave Johnson

Katie Kruse

George Lindquist

Chauncey Moran

Horst Schmidt

Robert "Skip" Schulz

Vicki Schwab

Travis Smith

Bob Stinson

Phil Wirtanen

Council Members Absent/Excused

Jim Lorenson

Warren Suchovsky

Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Staff Liaisons

Kristi Dahlstrom, Executive Division, Marquette

Bill Doan, Parks and Recreation Division, Baraga

Terry Minzey, Wildlife Division, Ishpeming

Stacy Haughey, Upper Peninsula Regional Coordinator, Marquette

George Madison, Fisheries Division, Baraga

Tim Melko, Finance and Operations Division, Marquette

Don Mankee, Forest Resources Division, Baraga

Lt. Pete Wright, Law Enforcement Division, Marquette

Special Guests

Commissioner JR Richardson, Chair of the Natural Resources Commission (NRC)

Mr. Steve DeBrabander, DNR Grants Manager

Mrs. Haughey began the DNR Division Reports portion of the WUPCAC meeting at 5:30pm EST. She welcomed NRC Commissioner JR Richardson. She also welcomed Dr. Kirk Schott from Senator Casperson's office.

She explained the public comment portion of the meeting and encouraged those in the audience who wish to speak to fill out a comment card.

DNR Division Reports

Written staff reports were provided to Council members on January 5, 2015. The following verbal updates were provided.

- **Stacy Welling Haughey, UP Regional Coordinator:** **Mrs. Haughey** introduced four new members of the WUPCAC: **Mr. A.J. Campbell** from Dickinson County, **Mr. Horst Schmidt** from Houghton County, **Ms. Vicki Schwab** from Delta County, and **Ms. Joan Duncan** from Marquette County. Each provided a brief introduction of themselves, their background and

interests. **Mrs. Haughey** reviewed the new member selection process with the group. She stated she appreciates all that the volunteers do for the WUPCAC. She also informed the Council that there will be two DNR all staff meetings held in the U.P. in late January, one in Marquette and one in the Soo. Members of the public might be curious of all the vehicles in the areas on these days, however, know that it is a staff meeting which is held every other year and include updates for staff along with awards for years of service.

- **Tim Melko, Facilities and Operations Division:** **Mr. Melko** explained his role with U.P. facilities as well as the customer service staff available at these facilities.
- **Lt. Pete Wright, Law Enforcement Division:** **Lt. Wright** stated another recruit school began this month with 44 new recruits who will potentially graduate as conservation officers. **Mr. Dropps** asked how many of those new recruits will be stationed in the U.P.; **Lt. Wright** indicated it is not yet known.
- **George Madison, Fisheries Division:** **Mr. Madison** stated that Ms. Jennifer Johnson was recently hired as the Northern Lake Michigan Management Unit fisheries biologist located in Crystal Falls.
- **Bill Doan, Parks and Recreation Division:** **Mr. Doan** stated that interviews for a property analyst position are being held. This position will help to fill the gap with landowner disputes (trespass and acquisitions), particularly with trails. There were 109 applicants. **Mrs. Haughey** noted Commissioner Richardson and Dr. Schott from Senator Casperson's Office were instrumental in getting this position approved.
- **Don Mankee, Forest Resource Division:** **Mr. Mankee** who was attending on Mr. Stampfly's behalf, noted that Mr. Stampfly will be transferring to the Eastern UP District Supervisor position, making the Western U.P. District Supervisor position vacant. Mr. Stampfly has been the Western UP District Supervisor and acting for the Eastern UP position.
- **Terry Minzey, Wildlife Division:** **Mr. Minzey** mentioned they have a cooperative agreement with the National Wild Turkey Federation and the Ottawa National Forest for a joint position; it was recently vacated and interviews were held in Ironwood today. He stated the Marenisco project is moving forward and ownership will be transferred to the township in July. There are impending budget issues for the Wildlife Division as the estimate from the new license fee restructuring and increase was not as projected. They most likely will be asked to reduce some habitat expenditures.
 - **Mr. Lindquist** asked if there would be funding for the high snowfall zone in the predator prey study. **Mr. Minzey** stated this hasn't yet been discussed.
 - **Mr. Lindquist** asked how the snow that is on the trees affects the moose survey. **Mr. Minzey** indicated the number of animals that cannot be seen has been built into the sight ability model. The main problem has been getting into the air with the windy conditions as of late.
 - **Mr. Schmidt** asked about the reduced budget projections. **Mr. Minzey** indicated it is not really known yet what areas will be affected. He stated what should be recognized, however, is the budget is much higher than what it was five years ago.
 - **Mr. Jarvi** stated he would like to see wildlife staff do a study in the Keweenaw. **Mr. Minzey** stated they do a study where the animals are located and there aren't many predators in that area. **Mr. Jarvi** stated he feels there are a larger percentage of predators [wolves] in the area than one might think.

Call To Order

Facilitator Wirtanen called the regular meeting to order at 6:00pm EST. Members recited the Pledge of Allegiance. The Council introduced themselves and indicated which stakeholder group they represent. Members of the audience also were asked to introduce themselves.

Adoption of Agenda

Facilitator Wirtanen asked if there were any additions to the agenda. **Mr. Schulz** stated he prepared a handout on the free ORV weekend to discuss. **Facilitator Wirtanen** suggested he reference it during the Trails/Recreation/Law committee report rather than create a new agenda item. **Mr. Lindquist motioned to accept the agenda as presented; Mr. Jarvi supported the motion. Ayes: All. Nays: None. Absent: Mr. Lorenson and Mr. Suchovsky. Motion carried.**

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

Facilitator Wirtanen asked if there were any corrections or additions to the December 1, 2014 WUPCAC meeting minutes which were emailed to each member previously. **Mr. Lindquist** stated he would like a wording change in his comments on page 2. **Facilitator Wirtanen** agreed. There were no other corrections noted. **Mr. Stinson motioned to approve the minutes with the correction made; Mr. Schulz supported the motion. Ayes: All. Nays: None. Absent: Mr. Lorenson and Mr. Suchovsky. Motion carried.**

Public Comments on Agenda Items Only

Facilitator Wirtanen explained the procedure for this section of the meeting and opened the floor for public comments.

- Mr. Bill Erickson of Ironwood about the status of a local USDA hunter who has worked to take care of problem wolves in the area, since the recent federal judge ruling on relisting the wolf on the endangered species list. **Mr. Minzey** indicated the local person will continue to work with depredation issues; the ability to harass problem wolves as needed still exists.

Old Business

1. **U.P. Wildlife Habitat Workgroup Update:** **Mr. Minzey** stated this group was formulated under NRC Commissioner Richardson to specifically look at what can be done to improve winter deer habitat on those lands not controlled by the DNR. About 20% of the winter deer habitat is on DNR managed lands with the remaining 80% in private land ownership (GMO and Plum Creek are the majority). Those included in the workgroup are the Hiawatha & Ottawa National Forests, Mr. Lindquist representing a host of organizations, Mr. Tony Demboski of UPSA, Plum Creek, Jim Hammill of the Safari Club, and a forester from the conservation district in Marquette, among others. A meeting was held on December 18 in which the direction of the group was determined and the next meeting on February 3 will focus on prioritizing deer winter complexes with a biological and sociological aspect. The Wildlife Division made a commitment of \$40,000 to hire a part-time person to work with private landowners. **Mr. Minzey** discussed the Wildlife Habitat Grant program and stated the part-time person will be instrumental in connecting the private landowners with this grant program.

- **Mr. Dropps** stated it is finally moving forward after years of talking about it. **Mr. Minzey** indicated those people who control the land base are at the table and this wasn't the case 30 years ago. **Mr. Lindquist** added it's exciting to see the people at the table wanting to do something. **Mr. Dropps** asked if the DNR is looking to exchange the land or buy the land; **Mr. Minzey** stated everything is on the table right now. **Mr. Moran** suggested someone coming to talk about land ownership.
- **Mr. Schulz** asked if moose is being considered for wintering complexes. **Mr. Minzey** indicated they are not being considered as they don't need the large complexes that deer do because of the length of their legs. The project is targeted specifically for deer.
- **Facilitator Wirtanen** asked about prior history of deer habitat in relationship to the efforts being done currently. **Mr. Minzey** stated in the 1990's, deer were overpopulated, with four mild winters in a row and high survival. The work being done now is a long-term exercise in which the benefits will be seen in 30-40 years. Thermal cover in the U.P. was also explained.
- A member of the audience asked what the eligible cost would be for a private landowner under the wildlife habitat grants. **Mr. Minzey** discussed the priorities for funding. Funding for these grants is provided from the fish and game fund as a result of the license restructuring. Mr. Lindemann from the audience asked if a private landowner where to be successful in getting a grant, will they have to open up their property to the public for hunting. **Mr. Minzey** explained why in some cases this wouldn't have to be done.
- Ms. Nankervis from the audience asked if a migration study is being conducted and if not, is there interest. **Mr. Minzey** stated not at this point. The Wildlife Division worked with sportsmen's clubs many years ago and has good information across the peninsula from the clubs.
- A member of the audience asked why only \$38,000 in grant funding came to the U.P. **Mr. Minzey** stated there were only four applicants and one was ineligible.
- **Mr. Schmidt** asked if there will be a more stable deer population in 30 years with the group's work. **Mr. Minzey** stated it is hoped the habitat will be built back up and it won't be as low. Winters are always an issue.
- **Mr. Dropps** asked about the size of the deer yards compared to years ago; **Mr. Minzey** explained.

New Business

1. **Wolf Status**: **Mr. Minzey** explained the ruling on the recent relisting of the wolf as an endangered species by a federal judge in Washington, DC. All of State of Michigan laws allowing the killing of wolves for any reason are suspended, including the ability to have a wolf hunt. The only time a wolf can be killed is if it's threatening human health and safety. There is still the ability to harass wolves, but they cannot be killed. He noted the DNR is moving ahead with updating the wolf management plan, which may be completed in April. The Natural Resources Commission (NRC) has the option to name the wolf as a game species the end of March. **Mrs. Haughey** added the DNR knew the lawsuit was occurring, however, the decision was surprising and disappointing. The DNR is working with the Attorney General's Office and legislators on this issue and the Council will be kept updated and informed.

- **Mr. Moran** noted that landowners will still be compensated for depredation.
 - Dr. Schott noted that the state is working on several things, but action has to happen at the federal level. He also stated that funding depredation will provide needed documentation to move forward.
 - **Mr. Dropps** stated that Mr. Russ Mason, Chief of the Wildlife Division, will be at the UPSA meeting in Iron Mountain on January 17th and will be talking about wolves as well.
 - Discussion ensued with several Council and audience members asking questions and comments on the relisting process, the endangered species act, wolf management funding, wolf population fluctuation, and next steps.
 - **Facilitator Wirtanen** asked **Mr. Lindquist** to discuss this issue in the Wildlife Subcommittee to see if there is a need for a resolution of support.
2. DNR Grant Update & Timelines for 2015: **Facilitator Wirtanen** welcomed Mr. Steve DeBrabander from the DNR Grants Management office in Lansing. **Mr. DeBrabander** introduced Ms. Christie Bayus, former U.P. grants coordinator and Ms. Merrie Carlock, the new U.P. grants coordinator. He stated the DNR has 28 grant programs and his office administers 11 of those. There is a grant workshop being held tomorrow, January 13th, at the Baraga Lakeside Inn, January 14th in Escanaba, and January 15th in St. Ignace for those interested in attending and learning more about how to submit a grant application. **Mr. DeBrabander** provided an overview of the grants listed in a handout that was included in the meeting packets.
- Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) Grant: Recently, the \$1 billion mark was reached in grants given out historically. One of the priorities for funding is the acquisition of land with winter deer yard qualities. The second priority for funding is trail related projects. Recreation facility development is also funded. The 2014 applications recommended for funding in December will go to the legislature and they will act on an appropriate bill. Specific to the U.P., there were 12 development projects recommended for funding out of 44 statewide. A total of \$28 million was recommended for awards; \$18 million for acquisition projects and \$6 million for development projects.
 - **Mr. Moran** asked about properties that are subject to development, but if purchased, would be protected. **Mr. DeBrabander** stated local units of government and the DNR are the only agencies that are eligible to apply for MNRTF grants. He stated the local unit of government needs to update their recreation plan every five years. Any project identified in the plan is eligible. They can also amend their plan anytime to make a project eligible.
 - **Mr. Schulz** asked why projects have to be on private land in order to turn it into public land, rather than use state forestland for a specific recreation project. **Mr. DeBrabander** stated there are many examples of trails that use both private and public land; it has to be included in the local recreation plan. **Mr. Schulz** asked how a local recreation plan includes state forestland in a project. He suggested instead of focusing on purchasing private land, the DNR should change the emphasis of certain areas to develop an ORV park like they do in the lower peninsula. **Mr. Mankee** stated it would need to be a land management decision; if there is a specific project and proposal, talk with a DNR rep who manages that property. The DNR can help

- individuals get started on the right path to develop a project for the DNR to review. **Mrs. Haughey** suggested **Mr. Schulz** discuss this issue further in the Trails/Recreation/Law subcommittee.
- **Ms. Duncan** asked if a map showing what lands can be developed into trails (or tax reverted lands that are open to multiple use concepts) could be provided. **Mrs. Haughey** stated she will check with DNR staff to see if a map is available. **Ms. Duncan** stated she has submitted two horse trail proposals for state land months ago, and hasn't heard a response. **Mr. Doan** stated both of the proposals are being reviewed and are going through the appropriate approval levels. Part of the process is reviewing the prior purchase of those lands to see if it's applicable. He will follow-up with Ms. Duncan this week.
 - Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant: **Mr. DeBrabander** noted that funding for these grants come from federal dollars. Projects similar to those submitted for the MNRFT grant are eligible; however, land acquisition is not. The grants require a 50% match. There were no applications submitted from the U.P. in 2014. Only 11 applications were received and all were funded.
 - Recreation Passport Grant: Out of 63 applications received, a total of 21 grants were awarded with 7 coming from the U.P. The DNR is not eligible for these funds.
 - Dam Management Grant: In 2012, there were over \$2 million in grants funded, such as the Sunday Lake dam spillway. Last year and this year, there was only \$350,000 available to award for dam repairs. Funding for this grant comes from the General Fund.
 - Aquatic Habitat and Wildlife Habitat Grants: These new grants are both funded from the recent license fee restructuring. A total of 43 applications asking for \$6.7 million were received. A pre-proposal process was added and of those received, 19 were invited to submit a full application and are currently in review. There is roughly a million dollars in each grant program and there is a big demand for these funds. In the last cycle for the Wildlife Habitat Grant, only two were funded in the U.P. out of three applications received, totaling \$38,000. A total of 20 projects were funded for \$1 million.
 - Michigan Invasive Species Grant: This is also a new grant. There is approximately \$3.5-4 million to award; 60 applications requesting \$15 million were received. In its first year, 15 applications from the U.P. were received. They are in the process of being reviewed with award announcements expected the middle of February.

Mr. DeBrabander stated that grants are making a huge difference in communities as well as provide a huge economic boost. Workshops on the recreation grants are being held this week and workshops on other grants will be held in the spring/summer. He answered a few questions from the audience on what can be included in the grant request (i.e. no overhead, minimum wage for volunteer labor, and more match equals a higher score). **Mrs. Haughey** added it is great news that there is funding to allocate, which has allowed more work on the ground through the license package increase. This group wanted to see these new funding sources. She indicated she has a U.P. breakdown of the grants received if anyone is interested. She also noted the DNR has recognized the hurdles in submitting applications and they are being responsive to why groups in the U.P. didn't apply. The minimum grant amount is \$15,000 which can be too large for a single group or groups without a trained

grant person. She has coordinated with a grants class at Northern Michigan University to help write grants for groups and one pilot project is through UPSA. If interested, contact her for more information or to get connected with the students.

3. Additional Agenda Items Added by Council: There were no additional items added to the agenda.

Committee Reports

1. Trails/Recreation/Law: **Facilitator Wirtanen** reported in Mr. Lorensen's absence. He asked **Mr. Schulz** to discuss the item he mentioned earlier in the meeting. **Mr. Schulz** stated he wanted to comment on the free ORV weekend that was noted in the last minutes. He distributed a handout to the Council. He discussed the history of the free ORV weekends initiative and the reasoning behind the choice of dates twice a year; in conjunction with free fishing weekend in June and the second weekend left open to coincide with the establishment of a trails week by the Governor. In the first year, the second weekend was held in late September. Recently, the ORV Advisory Workgroup, a subgroup of the Governor-appointed Michigan Trails Advisory Council, recently voted to change the second weekend from September to August. **Mr. Schulz** is a member of the workgroup and although he was present for the vote, he stated he was not aware it was the final decision and thought there was still time to garner support to keep the second weekend in late September. **Mr. Schulz** presented his reasoning on why the second weekend should remain in late September (i.e. fall colors, fall tourism, consistency in dates for the scheduling of events, competition with August fairs). **Mr. Doan** added that Mr. Jason Fleming, who is the DNR's representative on the Workgroup, stated that the second weekend date can be reviewed and changed in coming years and metrics could be developed to measure the success of the free weekends. **Facilitator Wirtanen** asked if there is any merit into having a different second weekend in the U.P. than the Lower Peninsula; **Mr. Doan** stated that it is being looked at from a statewide perspective since it is a statewide program. **Facilitator Wirtanen** referred the issue to the Trails/Recreation/Law committee to discuss further and develop a possible resolution for the Council's consideration at a future meeting.

Facilitator Wirtanen presented two resolutions the committee prepared for the Council's review and approval.

- Recommend that the MDNR establish an ORV crossing and open ORV designation at Bewabic State Park. **Facilitator Wirtanen** stated the committee is simply endorsing the concept. **Mr. Doan** stated in order to give access to Bewabic State Park for a designated trail, there would have to be a crossing at US-2 and the DNR would have to seek permission to create a crossing. Any safety issues would be addressed through that request. **Mr. Dropps motioned to approve resolution; Mr. Stinson supported the motion. Ayes: All. Nays: None. Absent: Mr. Lorensen and Mr. Suchovsky. Motion carried.**
- Support the public purchase of trails, as conceptualized by the Keweenaw County Recreation Authority (KCRA), across the Upper Peninsula so to better control access and continuity of use. **Facilitator Wirtanen** stated the KCRA presented to the Council their

project and plan and it was received favorably. Rather than a letter of endorsement for their specific project, the committee created this broader statement supporting their concept. Discussion ensued with the concerns of not knowing the exact scope of their project and plans, which lands are being considered, etc. **Facilitator Wirtanen** suggested rewording the resolution to address the concerns. The council agreed to the following reworded resolution: Support the public purchase of [add multi-use] trails [delete: as conceptualized by the Keweenaw County Recreation Authority (KCRA),] across the Upper Peninsula so to better control access and continuity of use. **Mr. Stinson motioned to approve the modified resolution; Mr. Anthony supported the motion. Ayes: All. Nays: None. Absent: Mr. Lorensen and Mr. Suchovsky. Motion carried.**

2. **Fisheries:** **Mr. Holmes** provided an update on the Warmwater Fisheries Committee's activities, specifically related to the potential impact of bass tournaments on the bass spawning periods. He stated the NRC may address this issue in March. He noted they also talked about muskies.
3. **Forestry:** There was no forestry report in Mr. Suchovsky's absence. **Facilitator Wirtanen** stated the committee is in need of additional members; **Mr. Schulz** and **Mr. Campbell** both volunteered.
4. **Wildlife:** **Mr. Lindquist**, the lead for the committee, stated the group met by conference call on January 5th. They discussed a variety of items and a number of questions were answered. The committee is interested in touring a deer yard, either the Skanee or Mange Creek deer yards, in the spring to see the projects first-hand. He will also be sending to the committee the deer winter range guidelines and a map on where the deer yards are located (this is also on the DNR website at: http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-10363_10856_10905-339639--S,00.html).

DNR Reports on Requested Information

Mrs. Haughey stated the following were requests for additional information at the last meeting or prior to this meeting:

1. **Funding for Cross Country Ski Grooming:** An update is included in the Division Report.
2. **Ramps and Access Sites in Winter:** There are two potential partners, however, there is no announcement at this time.
3. **NRC Term Limits:** A list of the commissioners and their term dates are included in the meeting packet. **Mrs. Haughey** announced that Commissioner John Matonich will be the next chair of the NRC. He has roots in Gogebic County and plans to retire there.

Next Meeting

1. **Next Meeting Date:** **Facilitator Wirtanen** noted the next WUPCAC meeting will be held Monday, March 16, 2015 and will be the Joint UPCAC meeting with the EUPCAC in Marquette.

2. Items for Next Meeting Agenda: **Facilitator Wirtanen** asked if there were any suggestions for agenda items for the next meeting. Suggestion topics were updates on the White Nose Syndrome, CWD outreach, and aquatic invasives.

Public Comments

Facilitator Wirtanen opened the floor to members of the audience for their comments about general topics.

- Ms. Diana Oman of Marquette stated she wanted to discuss Oman's Creek and the landing project, which is located in Gogebic County, north of Ironwood on Lake Superior's shoreline. She explained the family has owned the property for 110 years. The point is one of the best fishing spots and is a very popular boat launch and important safety refuge. In recent years, there has been significant erosion on the private property as well as the across the creek on state land and the county park. She wanted to come and meet the Council and seek any support the Council could give to the project. She stated Mr. Doan and his staff have been instrumental in advocating for a new solution on the project, and she is very thankful for the recent progress they have made. **Mr. Doan** explained the history of this project which has been a continual dredge for more than 40 years. In those 40 years, there have been 8 studies. The DNR has made a commitment to keep the boating access site open with whatever means possible. There has been significant loss of state property with the erosion in the parking lot. With the shoreline erosion, there are additional funding sources available and this will provide other opportunities to significantly improve this area.
- Mr. Nick Lindemann of Baraga stated he is president of the local turkey chapter. He stated the chapter has been working hard for 7 years on turkey habitat. The chapter knows that habitat work, done with the DNR, the tribes, and Plum Creek, is the solution for the future. In 2013, they collected data and provided it to the DNR, which comes from members in return for free grain. He stated the numbers he has are accurate, but it doesn't count all the birds. Over 10,000 pounds of grain have been given out. Some people are feeding 258 birds. One thing they've noticed through their data collection, the birds went from 50-60 wintering groups to much smaller groups and spreading out as the flock matured. **Facilitator Wirtanen** stated he appreciated Mr. Lindemann bringing this information to the Council.

Closing Comments

There were no closing comments from the Council.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:44pm EST.