

Western Upper Peninsula Citizen Advisory Council (WUPCAC)

Meeting Minutes

Monday, July 14, 2015

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

Island Resort & Casino Conference Center, Harris, MI

Facilitator: Phil Wirtanen Co-Facilitator: Warren Suchovsky

Council Members Present

David Anthony	Katie Kruse	Vicki Schwab
Ken Buchholtz	George Lindquist	Bob Stinson
Joan Duncan	Jim Lorensen	Warren Suchovsky
Larry Heathman	Chauncey Moran	Phil Wirtanen
Mike Holmes	Horst Schmidt	
Dave Johnson	Robert "Skip" Schulz	

Council Members Absent/Excused

A.J. Campbell	Mick Jarvi
Floyd Dropps	Travis Smith

Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Staff Liaisons

Kristi Dahlstrom, Executive Division, Marquette
Bill Doan, Parks and Recreation Division, Baraga
Craig Albright, Wildlife Division, Escanaba
Stacy Haughey, Upper Peninsula Regional Coordinator, Marquette
Darren Kramer, Fisheries Division, Escanaba
Tim Melko, Finance and Operations Division, Marquette
Don Mankee, Forest Resources Division, Baraga/Marquette
John Pepin, Public Information Office, Marquette
Lt. Pete Wright, Law Enforcement Division, Marquette

Mrs. Haughey began the DNR Division Reports portion of the WUPCAC meeting at 5:38pm EST. She thanked Council Member Dave Anthony and his wife Susie for their hospitality today in providing a tour of their family winery in the area for council members. She welcomed Mr. Dale McNamee from Senator Casperson's office.

DNR Division Reports

Written staff reports were provided to Council members on July 7, 2015. The following verbal updates were provided.

- **Stacy Welling Haughey, UP Regional Coordinator:** **Mrs. Haughey** noted the following highlights:
 - She attended the annual DEQ/DNR retiree picnic at Presque Isle today to provide them an update of DNR activities.
 - The deer survey results were discussed at the July 9th NRC meeting. Results indicated a decrease, which lead into the key topics for tonight (U.P. Wildlife Habitat Workgroup and Predatory Prey Study presentations).

- There is a new accessible site located in AuTrain—a fully accessible kayak/canoe launch on the AuTrain River. From parking lot to the launch site, one can fully launch their kayak or canoe. Also, Wells State Park has a fully accessible playground area and access to the lake by wheelchair.
- Mr. Marc Miller, DNR Deputy for Regional Initiatives attended outreach meetings in the U.P. last week. He is covering some of the duties of former DNR staffer Ms. Donna Stine. He traveled through 12 of the 15 U.P. counties visiting with county officials.
- **Craig Albright, Wildlife Division:** Mr. Albright noted he had one item to add to the written report. Two months from now ruffed grouse season begins. Today, he received the results of the spring drumming report. He explained the cycles of the ruffed grouse throughout the years. This most recent cycle has been at the top, which was not expected. It may be a good sign for fall.
- **Lt. Pete Wright, Law Enforcement Division:** Lt. Wright stated three new officers (two males, one female) will be coming to District 1 from the recent Academy. One will be assigned to Ontonagon County and two will be assigned to Gogebic County. An officer laterally moved to Dickinson County. One vacancy exists in both Menominee and Marquette Counties. Two officers in each county statewide is the division goal. In response to **Facilitator Wirtanen's** question, Lt. Wright explained what background experience is helpful for future applicants. Mr. Schulz asked if there have been any problems with ORV riders riding on the side of highways; many think all right of ways are open with the new law. Lt. Wright responded he has not seen any problems arise to date. Township and city ordinances must be followed in these cases as well.
- **Bill Doan, Parks and Recreation Division:** Mr. Doan stated he did not have any additions to his written report.
- **Darren Kramer, Fisheries Division:** Mr. Kramer stated the Fisheries Division will be hiring new personnel: two techs in Crystal Falls and a fisheries biologist in Escanaba. It is hopeful that these positions will be in place this fall or early winter. **Facilitator Wirtanen** asked about the DNR's role with sea lamprey. Mr. Kramer stated the USF&WS does a good job in mapping problem areas. The DNR works with them to time stocking efforts in the spring after lamprey treatments. The two agencies work frequently together on these efforts. Mr. Schmidt asked if sea lamprey are high volume reproducers; Mr. Kramer replied yes. Mr. Anthony asked if there are natural predators in the streams for sea lamprey; Mr. Kramer stated there is not a good window of opportunity for predators to put a dent in sea lamprey. Mr. Moran asked if contaminant surveys were done on the walleyes and pike that were captured this spring; Mr. Kramer stated DEQ handles the surveys and the DNR does the collection. The DNR is waiting for DEQ to request the collected fish.
- **Don Mankee, Forest Resource Division:** Mr. Mankee stated Manitoba, Canada is requesting fire fighters (4 person crews) from Michigan. The division will be discussing whether they can fill the need. There is the possibility that up to 12 persons could be dispatched within the next week. Mr. Lindquist asked what items are being supplied by the Wyman Nursery for wildlife. Mr. Mankee stated Wyman Nursery is managed out of the east U.P. and it typically regenerates red and white pine for reforestation. Mr. Albright added more in-house growth of red oak is being tried there with new funding. Mr. Schmidt noted he has been following the Canadian fires and they are 10-fold over last year. Mr. Schulz asked if the three prescribed burns are for Jackpine regeneration; Mr. Mankee

indicated they were wildlife burns. It was asked if the forest product industry is given a chance to harvest timber before a prescribed burn. **Mr. Mankee** replied it's typically done after a treatment of logging. Discussion ensued regarding sending staff to fires in Alaska and prescribed burns. **Mr. Lindquist** stated he appreciated Director Creagh's email in the division report about the land management plan. He stated members should review it and encourage legislators to move on this.

- **Tim Melko, Facilities and Operations Division:** **Mr. Melko** stated local offices have been busy with customers looking for campsites, fishing spots, and hiking areas. With the changes to the deer regulations (no antlerless hunting for bow season), calls to the offices from hunters have been positive. They understand the issue and appreciate the change. The UP State Fair is August 17-23 and volunteers are needed for the DNR Pocket Park. Group or clubs can volunteer. Please inquire at the Pocket Park or any DNR office.

Call to Order

Facilitator Wirtanen called the regular meeting to order at 6:08pm EST. Members recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Adoption of Agenda

Facilitator Wirtanen asked if there were any additions to the agenda. **Mr. Suchovsky** stated he will make a brief comment under the Forestry Committee; no formal report will be given since the committee has not met. **Mr. Buchholz** stated he'd like to make a comment on a project he is working on; **Facilitator Wirtanen** stated it will be added under New Business. **Mr. Moran motioned to accept the agenda as amended; Mr. Anthony supported the motion. Ayes: All. Nays: None. Absent: Mr. Dropps, Mr. Jarvi, Mr. Smith. Motion carried.**

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

Facilitator Wirtanen asked if there were any corrections or additions to the May 18, 2015 WUPCAC meeting minutes, which were emailed to each member previously. There were no corrections noted. **Mr. Lorensen motioned to approve the minutes as submitted; Mr. Holmes supported the motion. Ayes: All. Nays: None. Absent: Mr. Dropps, Mr. Jarvi, Mr. Smith. 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. Tim Kobasic of Escanaba, who is also a member of the DNR's Michigan Trails Advisory Council-ORV Advisory Workgroup, provided an update on several projects and trail upgrades undertaken by the DNR. August 22-23 will be the second of two free ORV weekends in the state. A feasibility survey will be conducted to determine the interest in continuing the free ORV weekend program. He also stated there has been great cooperation with the Ottawa, Manistee, and Hiawatha National Forests on trails. Several aspects of trail maintenance and development have seen great progress. **Facilitator Wirtanen** thanked Mr. Kobasic for the report.

Old Business

1. **U.P. Wildlife Habitat Workgroup Update/Presentation:** **Mr. Steve Carson**, DNR Deer Wintering Complex (DWC) Coordinator, who is working with the group on a full-time basis, provided a presentation and update on the Workgroup's progress. The following is a brief summary:
 - A map was shown displaying the average snowfall across North America and the northern range of whitetail deer.
 - A map was shown displaying the winter deer distribution/winter range of UP deer. Winter was less severe in southern lower Menominee, Dickinson, and Delta Counties. The northern part of the UP is more severe. Deer are obligated to move to deer wintering complexes in the southern areas.
 - In response to the concerns about UP deer winter range after the recent severe winters, the U.P. Wildlife Habitat Workgroup was reformed in 2014 to focus on deer winter range in the UP. A listing of a wide variety of representatives serving on the Workgroup was shown.
 - The Workgroup's mission is improving and conserving critical UP winter deer habitat, by developing comprehensive habitat strategies across the whole landscape.
 - Landowners/managers can access information on the Workgroup's progress through one of two ways:
 - The webpage on the DNR website (<http://bit.ly/uphabitatworkgroup>) under Boards and Commissions, which includes winter range maps, winter range information and management strategies including detailed DWC plans. He described the links that are included on the webpage and displayed a screen shot of the Lake Gogebic DWC. This plan will be posted at the end of the month if there are no further edits.
 - For those without online access, outreach will be through the notification of information updates to forest planners and conservation district foresters (key point of contact with the public) and through regular media updates as information becomes available.
 - **Mr. Schulz** stated these efforts may take a long time and help for the herd is needed now. **Mr. Carson** indicated the Workgroup is trying to develop efforts to help now as well.
 - **Mr. Lindquist** indicated he was having a hard time opening the maps to print.
 - **Mr. Suchovsky** asked if some of the outreach will be discussed at forestry open houses when the deer yards fall in those areas. **Mr. Mankee** stated open houses occur every year for 10% of the forest and typically they will have some modified prescriptions and Forestry will work with the wildlife biologists.
 - DWC Management Plan Status: A map was shown indicating which management plans they are working on. **Mr. Lawless** asked what incentive is available for landowners of large private land areas to participate as it seems most of the cost of helping the deer is on the landowner. **Mr. Mankee** stated for commercial forest landowners, they can manage their land for timber and still manage a DWC. **Mr. Carson** stated they are trying to indicate the incentives and links to forest stewardship. Most of the landowners are willing to manage their land and help the deer, despite the cost. **Mr. Lindquist** stated from what he has seen, big landowners are very willing to help as a good neighbor initiative.

- For more information, contact numbers were provided: Jim Hammill, Chair, at 906-875-6487 (ironrangeconsulting@gmail.com), Steve Carson, DNR, 906-563-9077 (carsons1@michigan.gov) or the website at <http://bit.ly/uphabitatworkgroup>.
 - **Mr. Schmidt** asked if the group is looking for both habitat and food for deer for winter. **Mr. Carson** explained they are both addressed in the plans. **Mr. Schmidt** wondered if food is as sufficient for the deer as it had been in the past. **Mr. Carson** stated most have more food available than needed, but there isn't enough shelter to get to the food.
- 2. Review of Response to May Joint CAC Resolution (UP Deer Management Options for 2015):
Mrs. Haughey stated no written response was prepared as the option was passed at the June 11th NRC meeting. The option to harvest antlerless deer during the archery seasons for hunters using deer or deer combo licenses in the UP was eliminated.

New Business

1. Predator Prey Study: **Facilitator Wirtanen** welcomed Mr. Todd Kautz, a graduate student from Mississippi State University, who is involved in the 6-year study. **Mr. Kautz** thanked the Council for allowing him to provide a presentation. He introduced two additional students who are also working on the study. The following is a brief summary:
 - The study involves the role of predators, winter weather and habitat on white-tailed deer fawn survival in Michigan. Mr. Dean Beyer is the co-principle investigator for the DNR. Several agency and funding sources are involved and include NMU, SCI, Wildlife Unlimited of Delta County, U.P. Whitetails, Michigan Bear Hunters Association, U.P. Bear Houndsmen Association, etc.
 - The project started six years ago in Escanaba (low-snowfall zone) from 2009-2011. The overall view of the project is to replicate a three-year study in each zone. Phase 2 runs from 2013-2015 in the mid-snowfall zone and phase 3 will be in the high-snowfall zone. Phase 2 areas include Baraga, Iron, Dickinson and Marquette counties.
 - The objectives of the project are to: 1) assess deer abundance and pregnancy and fecundity rates; 2) assess fawn and female deer cause-specific mortality and survival; 3) determine if fawn and doe survival is related to habitat, weather, alternative prey, or physiology; 4) resource selection by predators and deer throughout fawning season and estimate risk of predation on deer; and 5) examine multi-scale resource selection by predators relative to distribution of fawns and fawn birth sites.
 - Preliminary results of the fall deer camera survey indicate an overall trend in decline of the deer population. Adult females have been a steady decline. There was a poor fawn crop in 2013.
 - A snow-depth graph over the last three years from October-April was shown.
 - A chart showing doe condition in Escanaba (phase 1) and Crystal Falls (phase 2) by average adult female body mass by month was displayed. There was a 26-pound difference between the two study areas despite starting out at about the same weight.
 - The number of mortalities in collared does was measured. Most mortalities occur between March-May.
 - Adult female survival rate to date in 2015 is 76% between January-May. Overall 2015 figures are not yet calculated. 2013 overall was 54% and 2014 overall was 38%.

- The adult female body condition score chart and the average max rump fat chart both indicate a sharp decline in March 2015. **Mr. Suchovsky** asked what percentage of collared does are pregnant; **Mr. Kautz** replied 90-100%.
- The fawn birth mass chart indicates a higher survival rate based on birth mass in Escanaba than in Crystal Falls.
- Phase 1 conclusions: 1) relatively mild winters resulted in good adult doe survival; 2) adult female deer avoided areas occupied by wolves, selecting areas occupied by coyotes, resulting in an ecological trap for fawns; 3) coyotes did not shift space use in response to fawn parturition, suggesting opportunistic predation of fawns; 4) adequate cover habitat can play an important role in fawn survival, can be affected by late spring green-up (i.e. winter weather); 5) average doe body weights were stable or increasing from January-March.
- Phase 2 ongoing conclusions: 1) severe winters can be different and result in likely similar population level effects; 2) doe survival has been variable but poor, fawn survival was low for 2013 and 2014; 3) deer abundance appeared to be in a steady decline from September 2012-September 2014; 4) average doe body weights were decreasing from January-March.
- Updates on the study are available through the website (<http://fwrc.msstate.edu/carnivore/predatorprey>) and Facebook page (<http://www.facebook.com/MIpredprey>). **Mr. Lindquist** stated there is good information on both sites. **Mr. Lorensen** asked for a copy of the presentation; it will be sent to all Council members.

Mr. Kautz entertained questions from the Council. It was asked if there is any connection when fawns stop feeding from mom and begin feeding from the habitat. **Mr. Kautz** replied this usually occurs in later August or early September. This study was previously done. **Mr. Albright** indicated individuals who apply for supplemental feeding permits in the winter are given a brochure on the types of food that is good for deer, such as pelletized feed. **Mr. Kautz** responded that wolves and coyotes are the bulk of mortality causes in both areas (Escanaba and Crystal Falls) and phases. **Facilitator Wirtanen** thanked Mr. Kautz and his colleagues for their work and presence at this evening's meeting.

2. Council Survey: **Mr. Lorensen** stated at previous meetings, the Council showed interest in repeating a survey for items that would be important to discuss at future WUPCAC meetings. Responses would be prioritized and coordinated with NRC discussions. He distributed an outline of the process for the survey, which he will utilize the help of research students at the college to prepare the survey and review results. **Facilitator Wirtanen** encouraged members to respond as participation will be important. **Mr. Suchovsky** asked if it would make sense to survey the public at the DNR Pocket Park; **Mr. Johnson** responded that it may skew the results as responses may focus only on the Pocket Park. **Mr. Lorensen** stated he plans to survey only the Council due to the help he has available. **Mr. Holmes** asked if the EUPCAC has the same agenda; **Mrs. Haughey** stated the EUPCAC's agenda is slightly different with division reports being a part of the regular meeting rather than before. **Facilitator Wirtanen** asked the Council how many have a formal means of disseminating information received at Council meetings to each stakeholder group. He said he puts in a section in his group's newsletter. **Mr. Lindquist** stated he passes the agenda,

minutes, and division reports to the MUCC staff and wildlife committee, and also to Marquette County Whitetails. **Mr. Holmes** stated the UPSA members on this Council can bring information forward to that group when needed.

3. Additional Agenda Items Added by Council:

- **Mr. Buchholz** provided an update on an opportunity to build a hunting/viewing platform at Portage Marsh. Work will begin this year. He stated he met with Mrs. Haughey four years ago about increasing opportunities to increase accessibility in the woods and since then, there has been a lot of success. He noted the most accessible city in Michigan is Munising.

Committee Meeting Reports

1. Trails/Recreation/Law: **Mr. Lorensen** stated there are no resolutions from the committee to present at this time. The group tries to meet at least once between Council meetings. He noted success for the DNR and the WUPCAC with the granting of limited ORV use at Bewabic State Park. This was discussed at the committee, presented to and approved by the Council, and just approved by the DNR Director. The Council can make a difference. He provided an overview of discussion at their last meeting (a copy of the meeting summary was distributed). He stated the group did discuss the Forestry Committee's forest road resolution that was referred to them after the May meeting. More information is being requested. He explained the members learn something new at every committee meeting and although it seems like an impact isn't made, it truly is. **Mr. Schulz** commended Mr. Lorensen, Facilitator Wirtanen, Mrs. Haughey and Mr. Doan for the frank discussions at the committee meetings and helping them make an impact. **Mr. Moran** commended Mr. Doan for providing access to the plains through Baraga State Park. **Ms. Duncan** mentioned her dismay with communication about the money earmarked for horse signs, which **Mr. Doan** indicated has been spent. **Mr. Suchovsky** stated since the bulk of the trust fund money goes to acquiring more property, there is a concern that money is not available to take care of the existing inventory.
2. Forestry: **Mr. Suchovsky** stated that the committee did not meet as information for their agenda items was not yet available. He did, however, suggest the DNR create another division for engineering. **Mr. Mankee** noted that engineering services for the State of Michigan are provided by the Department of Technology, Management and Budget (DTMB). **Mr. Suchovsky** further discussed his recommendation to the Forest Management Advisory Committee to have the Forest Management Strategic Plan be sent to the WUPCAC's for review. He also mentioned the land strategy. **Mrs. Haughey** indicated meetings with legislators on the land strategy have occurred, conversations are ongoing, and the DNR continues to get closer to a resolution. She said an update can be provided at the September WUPCAC meeting. **Mr. Stinson** stated a suggestion was made at a recent Keweenaw Land meeting to encourage some kind of stewardship option to take care of what state land currently exists if more cannot be purchased. **Mrs. Haughey** stated she and the Director have been meeting yearly with U.P. counties who have a large amount of state land; 60% of the state land is tax-reverted, meaning ownership reverted to the state when taxes weren't paid, and was not due to a land purchase. **Mr. Suchovsky** also noted that

recently, Michigan received a grant from the Federal Forest Service to establish a statewide energy team. He was asked to join this group which meets on July 21st. He went through some of the questions they are to review.

3. Fisheries: **Facilitator Wirtanen** noted that Mr. Dropps couldn't attend the meeting this evening; however, he asked to pursue the discussion of aquaculture at a future meeting. **Facilitator Wirtanen** suggested this topic be given to the Fisheries Committee to discuss. **Mr. Anthony** agreed and will set up a future meeting. He said there are slides available that could be used in a presentation and Fisheries staff involved could attend via conference call.
4. Wildlife/Field Operations: **Mr. Lindquist** stated the committee has not met; however, he emails lots of information to members between meetings.

DNR Reports on Requested Information

Mr. Doan indicated that the hazard tree at Fort Wilkins State Park that was mentioned by Mr. Campbell at the last meeting was removed safely within a few days of the May 18th meeting.

Next Meeting

1. Next Meeting Date: **Facilitator Wirtanen** noted the next WUPCAC meeting is scheduled for Monday, September 21, 2015 at the Porkies Chalet. **Mr. Lorensen** stated the program at the Porcupine Mountains ski hill is run by Gogebic Community College and the program will have a BBQ for the next meeting along with chair lift rides to view the colors. Members indicated they are looking forward to the warm welcome.
2. Items for Next Meeting Agenda: **Facilitator Wirtanen** stated Mr. Lorensen will present the results of the Council survey if they are completed by that time, and any follow-up items from this evenings meeting will be included. If other agenda items arise before the next meeting, please let him or Mrs. Haughey know.

Public Comments

Facilitator Wirtanen opened the floor to members of the audience for their comments about general topics; there were no comments brought forth.

Closing Comments

Facilitator Wirtanen opened the floor for closing comments from the Council.

- **Mr. Lorensen** stated, in reference to the trails work and new staff mentioned the division report, Michigan exhibits great patience with their efforts to work with Wisconsin. However, Wisconsin seems not as interested in working collaboratively as we would like. **Mr. Holmes** indicated that Minnesota says the same thing about Wisconsin. Michigan passed a law for reciprocity for trails, but Wisconsin refuses to.
- **Mr. Lindquist** stated he would like to see Director Creagh attend one of the WUPCAC meetings, possibly in September. He indicated he forwarded the response from MUCC to the Council about the referendum last year which was reaffirmed by the courts.
- **Mr. Schulz** stated he appreciates the attendance of the representatives from Senator Casperson's office. He noted to check who conducts the ORV free weekend survey that was

mentioned earlier in the meeting as not everyone agrees. He commended Mr. Doan and Mrs. Haughey for their work.

- **Mr. Schmidt** stated he spoke with Mr. Al and Mrs. Kathy English regarding the proposed Graymont mine. He feels the voices of the people are not always heard when it comes to mining issues, especially when pushing the recreation aspect of UP tourism. He is concerned with the extreme pressure for new mining projects. **Mrs. Haughey** stated the DNR held many public meetings and was criticized for the time it took to allow all the public meetings. The EUPCAC had an update at every meeting for a year or more. **Mr. Lorenson** agreed that many public meetings were held and the DNR stayed to answer all questions and, from his perspective, the information was reviewed and considered adequately.
- **Mr. Suchovsky** stated things kept changing during the process of the mine land transaction and sometime between the last step in the negotiation process and the Director's decision, the public didn't get to provide input. Discussion ensued.
- **Ms. Kruse** stated that mine proposals are looked at project by project, and instead, they need to be reviewed as a whole or as a cumulative effect on this area.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:20pm EST.

Approved 9/21/15