

MINUTES

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

JULY 12, 2007

LANSING CENTER
333 E. MICHIGAN
LANSING

PRESENT FOR THE NRC

Keith Charters, Chair
Mary Brown
Hurley Coleman, Jr.
Darnell Earley
John Madigan
J. R. Richardson
Frank Wheatlake

PRESENT FOR STAFF

Peter Manning, Legal Counsel
Rebecca Humphries, Director
James Ekdahl, UP Field Deputy
Teresa Gloden, Assistant to the NRC

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chairman Charters called the Committee of the Whole meeting of the Natural Resources Commission (NRC) to order at 3:00 p.m.

DIRECTOR'S REPORTS

Fire Update

Lynne Boyd, Chief, Forest, Mineral and Fire Management (FMFM) Division, noted that today the fire "hotspot" was in southwest Michigan. That portion of the state has not received significant rainfall in many days. In the Saugatuck area there was recently a nine acre fire that destroyed three homes. There are a significant number of other fires currently burning throughout the state.

She reported that currently the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has 81 fire officers on staff, but that three will be gone in the fall. At that time, there will be an all-time low number of fire fighters (78). Michigan will likely need to send firefighters out of state to fight fires because of a reciprocal agreement with other states. However, it is possible Michigan would need to call in out of state firefighters if the need arises.

Emergency State Forest Campground Closures

Lynne Boyd reported that the Legislature made a \$75,000 reduction in state General Fund appropriation to the Recreation and Trail Program for fiscal year 2007. As a result, the DNR was forced to close 20 of the 138 state forest campgrounds across the state effective July 9, 2007. Dispersed camping is still allowed but prohibited within one mile of a designated state forest campground, either open or closed. There are no fees for dispersed camping.

Chairman Charters said that he regrets having to close campgrounds, especially during the busiest camping time of the year. He suggested that anyone questioning why the cut in General Fund to this program occurred to contact their Legislators. He said this is nothing the DNR is proud of but that cuts such as this to the budget result in adverse impacts to the resource users. **Commissioner Coleman** reiterated that it is important for those who have comments on this issue to contact their Legislators.

Parks Update

Reservations: **Ron Olson, Chief, Parks and Recreation Division**, reported that the camping reservations were down for the year by approximately 6 percent in February of 2007. Currently, that amount has been reduced to only 1.8 percent down from 2006. In June of 2007, however, reservations were up 6 percent over June of 2006. Boating nights are up 20 percent over 2006. Nearly 64 percent of camping reservations this year were made online which is an increase over past years.

Palms Brook State Park: **Mr. Olson** reported that flush toilets have failed at the Palms Brook State Park. The bathroom building needs to be renovated and brought up to code. However, the funding is not available and it is not an easy repair. He noted that a summary report of infrastructure improvements needs for this park and all others will be provided to the NRC.

Idlewild Historic District Boat Launch Development: **Monica Terrell, Parks and Recreation Division**, reported that for the past two years, the DNR has been involved in the Idlewild State Partnership Initiative along with the Department of History, Arts and Libraries, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, Department of Transportation, Michigan State Housing Development Authority, Department of Corrections, Department of Labor and Economic Growth, the United States Department of Agriculture, the Governor's Office, members of the Michigan legislature, and residents of the Idlewild community. Through this initiative, several items have been accomplished:

- Dock removals and repairs;
- A grant has been received through the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund for development of a boat launch and an interpretive trail;
- An internet site has been established featuring Idlewild;

Idlewild is known as a priceless treasure, not only due to its historical aspects, but because it is a viable economic entity. Ms. Terrell noted that the DNR is pleased to be a part of the revitalization of the national historic district and state treasure.

Deer Hunting Display at the State Library: Some time ago, **Director Humphries** had a conversation with Bill Anderson, director of the Department of History, Arts and Libraries (HAL), about how the two agencies could collaborate. As a result, the idea of creating an exhibit that would talk about the history of deer hunting in Michigan. This exhibit will be named, “A-Hunting We Will Go: Deer Hunting in Michigan, “ and opens at the Michigan Historical Museum in Lansing running through January 5, 2008.

LAND TRANSACTIONS

Director Humphries plans to withdraw from her approval, **Purchase of Tax-Revered Land Under Act 123, P.A. 1999, State Parks and Recreation Land Acquisitions, Thornapple River Boating Access Site 08-35 – Barry County, Land Transaction Case #20070136.**

SPECIAL RECOGNITION

Bob Gwizdz, Booth Newspapers

Chairman Charters recognized Bob Gwizdz from Booth Newspapers acknowledging that he is one who writes from the heart and with a passion that is clearly evident in his work and believes in the ethics of journalism—that is, fair and balanced reporting. Bob believes that the need for the “news” is about quality reporting and not the need to sell newspapers. A long-time outdoor writer, Bob embodies the best ethical sense of his profession. In this age of instant information, it’s hard to imagine where people will get their news. But for all the technological wonders, journalism is about the integrity of an individual reporter—and Bob Gwizdz has such integrity. He lives and breathes his work, and we are proud of all that he has done for conservation.

Chairman Charters presented Bob with a white pine plaque on behalf of the NRC and DNR in grateful appreciation for his exemplary contributions to Michigan’s natural resources through fair and accurate coverage of conservation issues.

Dr. R. Ben Peyton – Partners in Conservation Award

Director Humphries presented a Partners in Conservation Award white pine plaque to Dr. Ben Peyton for his tireless service and superior leadership in enhancing natural resources management and the Department’s public involvement process.

Dr. Peyton has worked with the DNR since the early 1980s to strengthen our interaction with the public, and on ways to enhance public involvement in setting DNR policy. As a professor at Michigan State University, Ben’s specialty is the human dimension of wildlife management, and the DNR has called on his expertise countless times as issues arose in Michigan.

For example, Dr. Peyton has:

- assisted the DNR in developing surveys to measure public support for deer management, including quality deer management;

- Assisted the DNR with bear management by working with stakeholder groups to help better define social issues related to bear populations.
- Led focus groups for us on fur harvesters, wolf management and Quality Deer Management, and has served as a facilitator for Wildlife Division strategic planning sessions, the wolf management roundtable and the wild turkey work group.

A tireless advocate for wildlife resources, Ben is a longtime traditional bowhunter and a good friend and mentor to many in the DNR.

Resolution of Tribute to Dana Debel, Governor Granholm's Environmental Policy Advisor

Chairman Charters presented the following Resolution to Dana Debel, who will be leaving the Governor's office and has accepted a position with Northwest Airlines as governmental affairs coordinator.

WHEREAS, Dana Debel has served as Governor Jennifer M. Granholm's environmental and energy policy advisor and was the Governor's liaison with the Natural Resources Commission and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR); and,

WHEREAS, the time in which she served was a period of great challenges for the DNR and the Natural Resources Commission, yet also a time when great accomplishments were achieved, such as lowering the hunting age and creating a hunter apprentice program so that sportsmen and women can focus on raising the next generation of conservationists; and

WHEREAS, Dana Debel has provided reasoned guidance for the DNR and its management team on many issues pertaining to the state's need to balance economic growth with environmental protection, and to conserve and protect our natural resources as one of Michigan's key assets for a great quality of life; and

WHEREAS, Dana Debel was instrumental in getting the Water Legacy Act introduced, fulfilling Michigan's promise to provide better protection for the Great Lakes. She also has led the push to institute common sense land use policies, and protect fragile coastline, wetlands and forestlands in the state; and,

WHEREAS, we, the members of the Natural Resources Commission and the DNR will greatly miss her expertise and contributions.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Natural Resources Commissioners and the DNR express our appreciation to Dana Debel for her valued assistance on matters of great importance to the natural resources and people of the State of Michigan; and,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be conveyed to Governor Jennifer M. Granholm with thanks for her support in providing the assistance of Ms. Debel to the Natural Resources Commission and the Department of Natural Resources.

CLOSED MEETING OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

At 3:52 p.m., the NRC went into a closed meeting to discuss legal and personnel issues. The closed meeting adjourned at 4:28 p.m.

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The Committee of the Whole meeting reconvened then immediately adjourned at 4:35 p.m. The Regular meeting of the NRC convened at 4:35 p.m.

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PUBLIC APPEARANCES

Lillian Hopkins, Citizens for a Quiet Community
Ellen Nitz, Friends for a Quiet Community
Tom Sprague, property owner, Gifford Lake
Jenness Wiegand, Citizens for a Quiet Community

Tom Sprague, property owner on Gifford Lake, requested establishment of a provision to use an electric motor on Gifford Lake. Due to medical issues, he is unable to row or paddle a boat. **Director Humphries** said that the township sets the ordinances on Gifford Lake but has asked DNR staff to meet with the township representatives regarding this issue. She noted that she is also meeting with the Office of the Attorney General to clarify what authorities the DNR Director has in this instance. A follow-up report will be provided at the August meeting of the NRC.

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Peter Manning, Assistant Attorney General, noted that the DNR has been dismissed from the litigation relative to the Island Lake Shooting Range. However, the case is still pending.

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Ellen Nitz, Friends for a Quiet Community, supported DNR fee increases because she believes the DNR does a great deal for the environment. However, in the case of the noise levels at the Island Lake Shooting Range, she does not believe the DNR is doing everything it can to reduce noise levels. She recommended that the DNR listen to the citizens in this case.

Jenness Wiegand, Citizens for a Quiet Community, reviewed documentation on the Island Lake Shooting Range covering the past few years. She asked that the DNR reduce noise levels from this Shooting Range.

Lillian Hopkins, Citizens for a Quiet Community, attended the court hearings relative to the Island Lake Shooting Range noise levels. She believes that surrounding residents could live with the Shooting Range if the noise levels were commensurate with, what she believes to be, the original intent.

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The Public Appearances portion of the meeting adjourned at 4:54 p.m. and the Regular meeting of the NRC convened at 4:55 p.m.

SPECIAL RECOGNITION

Friends of Wetzel State Recreation Area – Partners in Conservation Award

Director Humphries and Chairman Charters presented a Partners in Conservation Award white pine plaque to Lenox Bowman, Sherry Bowman, Mike Jennett, and Joey Jennett, from the Friends of the Wetzel State Recreation Area. **Director Humphries** recognized this organization for, among other things: holding annual spring cleanups and providing “park stewardship” certificates to participating youths; providing regular assistance and keeping a watchful eye at the recreation area; collaborating with students from a local school to monitor the health of Coon Creek; providing benches along the new trails; and, inviting “Michigan Out-Of-Doors” TV to tape its outdoor show at Wetzel to promote the area. She thanked and congratulated them for their accomplishments.

Friends of Maybury State Park – Partners in Conservation Award

Director Humphries and Chairman Charters presented a Partners in Conservation Award white pine plaque to George McCarthy and Chuck Murdock, who were present representing the Friends of Maybury State Park. The Friends group has provided financial support for special projects that make Maybury State Park such an outstanding place such as: providing the park with benches for the playground, supporting picnic table rebuilding, and a shed complete with tools for use by volunteer groups; and, creating, coordinating, and routing a history trail throughout the park, including the placement of two interpretive kiosks, and several interpretive signs. Additionally, they have provided funding and volunteer time in support of many park and community sponsored events; sponsored trail work days, invasive plant removal projects, and a bluebird monitoring program. These efforts have shown that through partnerships and public stewardship, we can achieve our common goal of fostering Michigan’s natural resources for the next generation!

INTRODUCTION OF THE NEW MICHIGAN UNITED CONSERVATION CLUBS (MUCC) EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DENNIS MUCHMORE

Don Meixner, President of MUCC, introduced MUCC’s new **Executive Director Dennis Muchmore**. Mr. Muchmore stated that a close relationship with the DNR is needed and that he supports the DNR and its mission. **Chairman Charters** committed to continue the long term partnership the DNR has had with MUCC. **Commissioner Brown** welcomed Mr. Muchmore and wished him luck. **Director Humphries** commended MUCC for “getting the right person in the job”, and looks forward to working with him.

DIRECTOR'S ACTION ITEMS

Commissioner Madigan questioned why the DNR was purchasing the Boating Access Site in Delta County since the water levels were very low. Discussion ensued that this property was tax reverted giving the DNR the first rights of refusal. Discussion ensued.

Commissioner Madigan commended the DNR for the wildlife land acquisition from the Plum Creek Land Company in Delta and Menominee Counties. This acquisition puts Deer Range Improvement Program (DRIP) properties in the UP over 10,000 acres.

Commissioner Wheatlake questioned the state parks and recreation land acquisition of tax-reverted land, Idlewild Boating Access Site, Lake County. **Director Humphries** stated this was another situation where the DNR had first rights of refusal. She will approve this, but will hold further discussions with staff and the attorney general's office relative to the "rights of refusal" issue.

Chairman Charters commented on the purchase of tax-reverted land, State Forest Land Acquisition, Roscommon Management Unit – Ogemaw County and stressed the importance of designating specific funding for removal of buildings on properties.

Chairman Charters questioned whether the DNR selling price for the sale of dedicated state-owned land, Traverse City Management Unit- Kalkaska County, would cover the costs of addressing the purchasers' trespassing violations over the past 40 years.

Director Humphries noted that the DNR has been addressing trespassing issues more now than in the past. **Lynne Boyd** noted that selling of properties where there is an existing trespass issues is reviewed very closely and said the DNR does not sell properties unless they are excess to its needs.

Commissioner Wheatlake advocates the DNR taking a more conservative approach to acquisitions.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – JUNE 7, 2007 NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION MEETING

Commissioner Earley made a motion, supported by **Commissioner Wheatlake**, for approval. Motion unanimously carried.

MANAGED WATERFOWL AREA AND SELECTED STATE PARKS WATERFOWL HUNTING REGULATIONS, WILDLIFE CONSERVATION ORDER, AND AMENDMENT NO. 12 OF 2007

Commissioner Madigan made a motion, supported by **Commissioner Brown**, for approval. Motion unanimously carried.

DEER REGULATIONS AND ANTLERLESS DEER LICENSE QUOTAS, WILDLIFE CONSERVATION ORDER, AMENDMENT NO. 13 OF 2007

Commissioner Madigan made a motion, supported by Commissioner Earley, for approval. Commissioner Madigan lives in DMU 21 and said it is too bad that the decision on quotas for this DMU were based on populations in a small portion of the DMU that impact the entire area.

Commissioner Wheatlake made a motion, supported by Commissioner Madigan to make the following changes to the proposed antlerless deer license quotas:

DMU 020: Crawford County - Public Licenses to 700 (from 1500)
DMU 065: Ogemaw County – Private Licenses to 1000 (from 2000)
DMU 072: Roscommon County – Private Licenses to 1000 (from 1500)

Following discussion, the motion to amend carried unanimously.

The motion to approve Deer Regulations and Antlerless Deer License Quotas, Wildlife Conservation Order, Amendment No. 13 of 2007, as amended, carried unanimously.

Commissioner Coleman acknowledged and appreciated amendments to the antlerless deer license quotas were made as a result of public input. He appreciates input from the public.

Chairman Charters noted that deer goals need to be a priority. **Dr. Moritz** said that Wildlife Division staff is planning to develop a new management plan including new population goals. This plan will go through a public review process to insure that the plan is as open and transparent as possible.

ELK SEASON QUOTAS, WILDLIFE CONSERVATION ORDER, AMENDMENT NO. 14 OF 2007

Commissioner Madigan made a motion, supported by Commissioner Earley, for approval. Motion unanimously carried.

CROSSBOW PERMITS

Commissioner Coleman noted that he has been approached by acquaintances regarding obtaining a crossbow permit. **Commissioner Madigan** asked staff if those who apply for crossbow permits are also notified of the modified bow permit option in the event they do not qualify for a crossbow permit. **David Freed** responded that that information is automatically provided along with a crossbow permit application.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

NRC Policy Committee on Technology, Information, Marketing and Education (TIME)

The meeting of the NRC Policy Committee on TIME convened at 12:30 p.m. and adjourned at 1:30 p.m. Commissioners Brown (Chair) and Coleman. Commissioners Charters, Madigan, Richardson and Wheatlake were also present. Minutes are attached.

NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries

The meeting of the NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries convened at 1:30 p.m. and adjourned at 2:30 p.m. Commissioner Madigan (Chair), Earley and Charters were present for the Committee. Commissioners Brown, Coleman, Richardson and Wheatlake were also present.

COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Commissioner Wheatlake will be going to Mongolia on a hunting trip in July or August. He attended meetings across the state to address the hunting and fishing license fees issue.

Commissioner Richardson attended public meetings in the UP where the hunting and fishing license fees were discussed.

Commissioner Madigan said the trout fishing in the UP is good; attended a meeting in St. Ignace where the topic was the hunting and fishing license fees; and visited a deer ranch in the UP where fencing was an issue.

Commissioner Coleman said he was approached by folks in West Branch regarding increased bear sightings. He asked for a review of the bear population. He also expressed concern regarding the closure of state campgrounds.

Chairman Charters said he is not proud of the fact that the DNR had to close state forest campgrounds as a results of budget issues. However, he stated that the budget cuts continue and there will be times when those cuts actually impact the resources. He believes there is general support for the hunting and fishing license fee increases, but for some reason the Legislature is not supporting the increase.

The meeting adjourned at 6:12 p.m.

Minutes

**NRC Policy Committee on
Technology, Information, Marketing and Education
July 17, 2007
Lansing Center
Lansing, MI**

UPDATES

Ron Olson, Chief of the Parks and Recreation Division, gave an update on the Kicking Bear program that will be held Aug. 24-25 at Sleepy Hollow State Park.

Kevin Frailey, Office of Communications, gave a briefing on The Salvation Army Outdoor partnership with the department, teaching outdoor skills to inner city/urban youth at the Detroit Pocket Park.

Kevin Davis, Law Enforcement Division, gave an update on Hunter Safety Education.

Denise Gruben, Office of Land and Facilities, gave a briefing on the E-Mobile Fishing License Pilot Project, scheduled to begin in August to sell 24-hour fishing licenses over cell phones and other personal digital equipment.

The meeting adjourned at 1:30 p.m.