

MINUTES

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

July 10, 2008

Munising American Legion
610 W. Munising Avenue
Munising

PRESENT FOR THE NRC

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

ABSENT FOR THE NRC

Frank Wheatlake, Vice Chair

PRESENT FOR STAFF

Hal Martin, Legal Counsel
Rebecca Humphries, Director
Rodney Stokes, Chief of Staff
Mindy Koch, Resource Management Deputy
Tom Courchaine, Acting UP Field Deputy
Patricia Stewart, Chief, Office of Communications
Teresa Gloden, Assistant to the NRC
Other DNR Staff

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.

AXIOM ENTERTAINMENT – MAIN STREET AMERICA

Patrick Crosson, Axiom Entertainment, said MainStreet America is a proposed year-round theme park that is proposed to include the following themed components: The North Pole Arcadia, Industry and Science, Water Park, Children's Area, Tribute to the Armed Forces, The Polar Express and more. **Mr. Crosson** provided an overview of the project's economics, environmental structure and demographics as well as a marketing plan and estimated start-up project development costs. This area is located near the intersection of I-75 and 4 Mile Road in Grayling.

The property Axiom Entertainment desires to purchase encompasses approximately 1,800 acres. Approximately 1,693 acres of the 1,800 acres are owned by the State of Michigan and the proposed purchase price is \$5,214,440. A current survey will be required to determine actual acreage and final purchase price. The estimated project cost to develop the park is estimated at \$161 million of which \$154 million will be spent with Michigan based firms.

From the environmental standpoint, **Mr. Crosson** proposes to develop the park in an environmentally friendly manner utilizing 31.1 percent of the land to be acquired for development. The proposal identifies alternative energy sources.

Mr. Crosson said they continue to work with Remington Financial and said, though there has been a great deal of press regarding Remington Financial as of late, he does not believe there is reason not to work with them and will continue to work with them. Axiom Entertainment is also working with several other firms to provide financing for the park and its development.

He responded to a recent editorial that indicated that he was too overly optimistic in Michigan and did not apologize for that. He believes that what they are proposing is in the right place at the right time with the right people.

John Bellow, Crawford County resident, said if the DNR sells this land to Axiom Entertainment and it will create "Autoworld north," and said "build it and they won't come." He disputed the numbers given by Mr. Crosson relative to the number of jobs and visitors to the proposed park. He questioned, if this is a good location and a good plan, why aren't the major theme park companies and Michigan financial institutions willing to participate?

Marvin Roberson, Sierra Club, opposes the proposed MainStreet America theme park in Grayling for the following reasons: 1) the proposal falls far outside what was contemplated in the 2000 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) regarding use of the land; 2) the requirements of the MOU have not been met in any way; 3) the proposed development is not realistic; 4) it is poor public policy to take forest land owned by the people of Michigan and change the characteristics of that quiet, Au Sable River valley into a carnival. He elaborated on these statements.

Commissioner Coleman asked Mr. Roberson what his basic complaint is with the project. **Mr. Roberson** said the Sierra Club had reservations on the original MOU regarding use of this land, but did not object to the light industrial development when the MOU was signed. **Commissioner Coleman** asked if **Mr. Roberson** had posed his questions directly to Mr. Crosson. **Mr. Roberson** said yes, he had met with the developer and a few of the questions have been answered and suggested the questions should be asked by the decision maker. **Mr. Roberson** said that the company indicated as the "green" company (Partners Green) cannot be located and does not appear to him to exist.

Commissioner Madigan asked why the developer needs other financial backing other than Remington Financial. **Mr. Crosson** responded that the other financial sources have always been involved. He said that it is wise to have other financial sources in the event one is unable to participate.

Commissioner Richardson asked how big of a power plant will be needed to supply power to the project. **Mr. Roberson** responded it is 50 megawatts.

Commissioner Coleman said he understands that the developer needs to have the total acreage in the request (1,800 acres approximately) before it can move forward. **Mr. Crosson** said the access to the property would be phased in over 12 and 24 months. The first 12 months of development will have to be met before access to the remainder of the property. He said that the project could begin without the total land purchase being completed.

Commissioner Coleman reflected on **Mr. Crosson's** presentation regarding monies that have been set-aside from the State of Michigan and other places and asked how Mr. Crosson represents the funds that are alleged in place. **Mr. Crosson** said they are identified in the documentation provided.

Mr. Crosson said he would be happy to meet with individuals regarding any additional questions they may have.

Commissioner Brown questioned, in phase 2 (selling an additional 1,200 acres), where the State must sell at market value, how does he intend to utilize those additional acres and why would he need them? **Mr. Crosson** said the master plan indicates there would be cultural, industrial, commercial and recreational use plans. Building hotels, a training center, and an amphitheatre have all been indicated in the master plan. Each of these segments of the plan would have to go through township zoning review and building code review for compliance. The proposal indicates that the entire purchase price of the land goes into escrow (\$2,900 per acre) plus a 10 percent transaction fee. As the phases of the project would progress, those funds would be drawn against escrow.

Mr. Crosson stated that Axiom Entertainment has had a chance to purchase the property for the past 14 months. However, the DNR requested that the monies be available for all of the land prior to the DNR selling the property. He agreed. To further emphasize that point, Axiom Entertainment would add a guaranteed completion bond that would ensure that once ground is broken there is a guarantee for completion. He stated there is a team of construction companies involved in designing and building the park.

Mr. Crosson stated that \$11.5 million would come from the State of Michigan: \$9.5 million from Michigan Department of Transportation for interchange and road improvements; and \$2 million from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation for interior road systems. Axiom Entertainment would have to match 29 percent of those funds.

Commissioner Earley was troubled with the lack of financial backing for the project by the developer, but is more concerned that the developer needs to obtain the land prior to anything else being able to transpire. He had discussed the issue previously with **David Freed, Chief, Office of Land and Facilities**, and asked whether a sufficient business plan had been provided as necessary to secure funding. It appears that has not been met. **David Freed** said the desire by Axiom Entertainment was to have a letter indicating that the State would definitely sell the land if financing were in place. That was not done because the issue needed to be put through a public appearance process prior to doing so. **Commissioner Earley** said the public process has to be done prior to any decisions being made. There appears to be a lot of work yet to be done. **Mr. Crosson** said he did not intend to circumvent any process and would be more than willing to provide additional information as requested. He said he has never requested to obtain the property prior to full financial backing and understands that the DNR has never committed to sell the property. He said he would work with the Office of Land and Facilities to ensure what is in the best interest of the DNR and ultimately the State of Michigan.

Chairman Charters said the decision to sell property to Axiom Management would be a Director's decision with the advisement of the NRC. He said he was present when the original MOU was agreed to, and it was not a popular decision at the time. Anything that is good for Grayling, he supports. However, the NRC and the Director have a fiduciary responsibility to the people of Michigan any time a piece of public land is sold. **Mr. Crosson** said he is not requesting a letter from the DNR stating it will sell him the land. He said this is the beginning of the formal process to gather public comment. **Chairman Charters** questioned once the public process is completed and assuming the DNR Director approves the sales with conditions, then does Axiom Entertainment have the cash to put into escrow? **Mr. Crosson** said he understands that the DNR cannot sell the land until all of the money is in escrow and that the current public process is the first step that is required. He also understands that the DNR Director could approve the sale of land at the August 14, 2008 NRC meeting if the \$168 million is in escrow but reiterated he understands that the sale will not take place without proper funding in place.

Chairman Charters wanted to clarify that the DNR is not the barrier in this project. **Commissioner Coleman** said the issue of State land being used or misused is a critical issue. He said it needs to be clear what is going to happen to the property. He loves the idea of economic development in Grayling, but also believes it is important to have the important discussions now and believes all questions should be answered. The process is moving along.

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Chairman Charters acknowledged **Representative Stephen Lindberg from Marquette, Representative Joel Sheltroun from West Branch and Representative Jack Hoogendyk from the Kalamazoo area.**

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UP POCKET PARK UPDATE

Ann Wilson, Office of Communications, UP Office, presented an update on the UP Pocket Park located within the UP fairgrounds in Escanaba - one of two pocket parks in Michigan dedicated to recruitment and retention of outdoor activities. The other is located in the City of Detroit. In the summer of 2008, between 30,000 and 50,000 people passed through the UP Pocket Park.

The UP Pocket Park's resource center is in the process of being renovated and was funded by a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant. An interactive classroom and welcome center are being developed. The DNR is host to different groups and organizations on a regular basis in the summertime.

Director Humphries has toured the UP Pocket Park and has seen the renovations. **Pat Stewart** said that approximately double the amount of people go through the Detroit Pocket Park as the UP Pocket Park.

SPECIAL RECOGNITION – ANN WILSON

Director Humphries said before coming to the DNR, Ann had a career in radio with Northern Michigan University, and as the "voice" of the UP media having narrated many public service announcements and documentaries. Because of Ann's familiarities with the UP and our Department issues, she became DNR's UP communications representative, and has been serving us well for the last 18 years.

In addition to her work at the UP Pocket Park and State Fair, Ann is also the UP's Becoming an Outdoors Woman, also known as BOW, program coordinator and education/outreach specialist with local schools and universities, serving as a mentor to many. Ann also coordinates our UP "Ask the DNR" program with Public TV 13 at Northern Michigan University, and orchestrated the Department's pilot radio program last year with Outdoor Magazine. Ann is retiring at the end of August.

Director Humphries thanked Ann for her enthusiasm and her can-do attitude and thanked her for the many years of service.

UPPER PENINSULA CITIZEN ADVISORY COUNCILS (UPCAC)–CHARTER

Tom Courchaine, Acting UP Field Deputy, said there are two UPCACs – one for the east side and one for the west side. He reviewed the Upper Peninsula Citizen Advisory Council's Charter. The need for the Councils is to more fully involve citizens, sportsmen and sportswomen in providing input into the DNR's decision-making processes. The purpose of the Councils is to assist the DNR in being more responsive and operate more efficiently and effectively within the

constraints of state and federal law. The UPCACs will advise the DNR on various regional programs and policies, identify areas the DNR can be more effective, and offer insight and guidance from members' own experiences and constituencies.

The UPCACs are voluntary and are advisory in nature. Members have been nominated by a group of DNR and non-DNR staff and will be announced soon. Members are expected to attend meetings and offer their thoughts and ideas, communicate in a respectful manner and share information about the work of the UPCAC with other individuals and groups as appropriate. A review of the operations and functions of the UPCACs will be conducted by the councils and the DNR every two years. Recommendations for charter changes will be considered by the DNR at the end of the review process. The UPCAC meetings will be open to the public.

Commissioner Madigan said the objective of the UPCAC is to allow the public to bring up issues earlier in the process and to allow the DNR to respond to these issues earlier. The DNR will provide information regarding restrictions and legalities on issues as they arise. Commissioner Richardson thanked Tom for his work on this and said the wealth of knowledge from the committee members needs to be harnessed.

DIRECTOR'S REPORTS

Director Humphries provided the NRC with a Legislative update as well as a Washington DC report and said if there are questions on any of the information to contact her.

Director's Action items include the Wolf Management Plan and several land transactions. She asked if anyone had questions on this issue.

The Committee of the Whole meeting adjourned at 4:20 p.m. and the Public Appearances portion of the meeting convened at 4:35 p.m.

Chairman Charters recognized **Representative Hoogendyk, Representative Lindberg and Representative Casperson.**

Chairman Charters also recognized **Jim Ekdahl** who recently retired from his position as UP Field Deputy for the DNR.

SPECIAL RECOGNITION – Bill Doan and Tony Sassin

Ron Olson, Chief, Parks and Recreation Division, said Lake of the Clouds Scenic Area in the Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park is a popular destination for snowmobilers and other winter visitors to upper Michigan. When Parks and Recreation Division staff is called upon to respond to an accident on the trails, they pride themselves on responding quickly and professionally. **Bill Doan and Tony Sassin** were the first responders on the scene on February 7, 2008 when a visitor from Minnesota lost control of his snowmobile, went off the trail and hit a tree. The individual was critically injured, with a compound fracture of his right femur and severe bleeding. Their prompt response to the situation, and the first aid they rendered, may well have saved this person's life. Their actions exemplify the highest standard of public service.

Mr. Doan and Mr. Sassin were presented a DNR white pine plaque honoring their actions.

PUBLIC APPEARANCES

John Bebow, Crawford County
Dennis Carlson, UP Whitetails of Alger County
Marcia Cella, Baraga County
Paul Compo, Crawford County Administrator
Kay Cosgray, Michigan Works! Crawford and Oscoda Counties
Alan Diodore, AuSable North Branch Association and Foundation
Gaila Gilliland, Crawford County Economic Development
Jamie Greer, Grayling
Karen Harrison
Jack Herrick, Rapid River
John Hongisto, UP Sportsman's Alliance
Sam Houston, Grayling
Mary Jane Knibbs, Grayling
Linda Knibbs, East Jordan
Tim Kobasic, Sportsmen's Off-Road Vehicle Association (SORVA)
of Delta County
George Lindquist, UP Whitetails
Johnny Lucas, Trenary
Jonathan Lutz, Michigan Audubon Society
Joe Mahaney, Friends of Blueberry Ridge
Jay Maki, Newberry
Rory Mattson, UP Sportsman's Alliance
Chad McCurdy, Frederic
Dale McNamee, Upper Peninsula Sportsman's Alliance
Bob McReavy
Judy McReavy, Oxford
Kristi Mills, Save the Wild UP
Doug Miron, Alger County Fish and Game Alliance
Gary Modlin, UP Whitetails of Marquette County
Chauncy Moran
Eric Navares, Munising
Ed Nellist, Roscommon County Commission
Mark Nordia
John Novak, Grayling
Larry Paxton, Roscommon County
Jim Pearson
Mike Pryal
Cynthia Pryor, Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve
Bryan Reynolds, UP Whitetails of Marquette County
Marvin Roberson, Sierra Club
Don Seymour
Harvey Sherman, Millington
Richard Smith, Marquette
Clyde Thoun, Stephenson
Jim VanderLaan, Lake City
Nancy Warren, Ewen
Terry Wright, Grayling Township Supervisor

Dale McNamee, Upper Peninsula Sportsman's Alliance, will participate in the UPCAC but believes the selection process was suspect; suggested piebald deer be added to the endangered species list; believes albino deer should be added back on to the endangered species list since he believes the possibility of passing on traits is small; questioned the antlerless license process; and asked for more transparency in the review of the DNR spend plan.

Don Seymour believes the antlerless deer rules in the UP are confusing and believes they are the same as quality deer management (QDM); believes the two gallon baiting and feeding regulation should not exist; and he suggested utilizing an "earn-a-buck" process to balance the deer herd.

Joe Mahaney, Friends of the Blueberry Ridge, a voluntary, nonprofit group, said the main purpose of the Friends group is to work with the DNR and other interested groups and individuals to assure continued funding for high quality snow grooming and pre-season maintenance of the Blueberry Ridge trails and related facilities. He said he was pleased that the funding exists to groom the trails in the upcoming season. He believes the solution to having an adequate budget for cross country ski trail maintenance improvement and grooming, state-wide, lies in a program of mandatory user fees.

Rory Mattson, UP Sportsman's Alliance, said that it is not the direction of the DNR that is at issue, but how the information is given. He criticized Wildlife Division staff for providing only partial information in response to his inquiries. He believes the DNR misled the public and provided two examples: 1) Pigeon River State Forest trail riders and the usage of the trails; 2) why private land licenses are going through an application process versus over-the-counter when licenses are not sold out in areas.

George Lindquist, UP Whitetails, was pleased that the buck regulations in the UP were approved and said UP Whitetails is in the process of disseminating information to UP hunters on the new regulations. He said some of the media coverage has been misleading, he was working on correcting the wrong information. The new regulations are supported by UP Whitetails and the UP Sportsman's Alliance. The Quality Deer Management (QDM) Association also supported the regulations.

Jay Maki believes the Wolf Management Plan for Michigan should include a trapping/firearm season to control the excess numbers of wolves in Michigan's UP and eventually the Lower Peninsula.

Harvey Sherman, Millington, opposes the new buck regulations for the UP stating they are QDM regulations.

John Hongisto, Upper Peninsula Sportsman's Alliance, criticized Wildlife Division staff and commented on the Wolf Management Plan. 1) He requested that the sentences relative to whether or not wolves were brought into the State by the DNR be deleted; 2) He requested that the language on the cultural significance of wolves be deleted; and 3) He believes the wolf population has reached the trigger point that exceeds the cultural carrying capacity over most of the UP and asked that this be addressed. **Mr. Hongisto** requested that action on the Wolf Management Plan be delayed until these issues are addressed.

Jonathan Lutz, Michigan Audubon Society, expressed concern with the proposed acquisition of DNR property located at Whitefish Point that would be used for public parking. He stressed the importance of Whitefish Point as a wild bird habitat. **David Freed, Chief, Office of Land and Facilities**, said this land transaction was not on the Agenda for Director's approval today.

Mike Pryal does not believe the DNR has been truthful relative to UP deer harvest and population. He did not agree with lowering the license age and encouraged making decisions based on sound scientific management.

Doug Miron, Alger County Fish and Game Alliance, recommended that a committee be formed to address fishing issues in Munising Bay. He does not believe the tribal nets are properly marked.

PARTNERS IN CONSERVATION AWARDS

Citizens of Luce County

Director Humphries presented a Partners in Conservation Award to the Citizens of Luce County for their involvement in the Sleeper Lake Fire of 2007 - the third largest in recent Michigan history covering over 18,000 acres. Terry Stark, DNR, Office of Land and Facilities, and the citizens of Luce County were present to receive the award. The DNR received tremendous support from a wide range of individuals and groups in Luce County. For example, emergency services personnel of Luce County provided evacuation, road closures, wildfire suppression, structure protection and resource coordination. Disaster relief services provided food, medical supplies, and personal services. Local citizens provided food (much of it homemade), laundry, local gifts (many firefighters found things like Newberry T-shirts given when they got their laundry back), and extremely strong local support. She thanked them for providing services such as fire fighter signs, waving fans along roadways and special messages on local radio stations.

This all kept morale extremely high for a wildfire that took more than a month to suppress. She presented a white pine plaque to the Citizens of Luce County for their efforts and said many thanks to all who assisted.

Friends of the Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park

Director Humphries presented a Partners in Conservation Award to the "Friends of the Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park." **Jim Bradley, President of the "Friends of the Porkies,"** represented the group.

Director Humphries thanked the organization for its long-time support for the Park. The group has provided financial assistance and countless hours of hard work for special, innovative projects that make the Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park a special place. These projects include, but are not limited to:

- providing interpretive signs and lumber for trail improvements, "mini-grants" to support environmental education programs in the park
- printing the park's annual summer newspaper; developing a highly successful Artist-in-Residence program – the first of its kind in Michigan State Parks
- for creating the first ever Folk School, where the first project was a hands-on building of a log cabin using traditional tools and methods (this log cabin now houses the Artist-In-Residence and Folk School participants)
- donating funds to purchase 71 youth fishing licenses for youngsters participating in Michigan's Free Fishing weekend
- serving as the financial conduit for the purchase of search and rescue equipment and upgrades to the park's patrol boat
- creating and sponsoring the Porcupine Mountains Music Festival, which draws people from across the country to Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park in August each year.

The Friends of the Porkies also received a Community Service Award in 2007 from the Michigan Recreation and Park Association.

The Friends' efforts have shown that through partnerships and public stewardship, we can work together to achieve common goals, enhance outdoor recreation experiences, and enhance stewardship of Michigan's natural resources. **Director Humphries** thanked the Friends for their hard work, for investing in conservation and enhancing Michigan's quality of life.

PUBLIC APPEARANCES (continued)

Linda Knibbs, East Jordan, opposes Axiom Entertainment purchasing property in Grayling for an amusement park.

Mary Jane Knibbs, Grayling, opposes Axiom Entertainment purchasing property in Grayling for an amusement park.

Clyde Thoun, Stephenson, prefers pheasant hunting in the grasslands rather than on the roads and asked that pheasant shooting hours in the UP be changes; was surprised with the antlerless license computer glitch; believes that all state land users should have some sort of license; and recommended hiring more conservation officers to assist with hunter safety classes.

Bob McReavy thanked Wildlife Division staff for attempting to resolve antlerless permit issues in Roscommon County. Reducing the antlerless deer permits in Roscommon County is a step in the right direction. However, he would prefer zero public and zero private. He believes that clearcutting is unacceptable.

Jim Pearson supports managed growth but opposes Axiom Entertainment purchasing property in Grayling for an amusement park. He suggested no decision be made unless appropriate financing documentation is provided.

Karen Harrison opposes Axiom Entertainment purchasing property in Grayling for an amusement park.

Tim Kobasic, Sportsmen's Off-Road Vehicle Association (SORVA) of Delta County, said SORVA is working in cooperation with DNR staff and area counties in supporting the planning process of expanding trails and routes open to use. Part of the plan is to connect trails and route systems, establish a trail from Escanaba to the Hiawatha National Forest and construct a bridge over the Whitefish River in Rapid River. The SORVA requested the DNR support and requested a recommendation to the Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) Advisory Committee and Department of Transportation to allow use of this bridge for ORV and ATV riders.

Additionally, he stated he spoke with Wildlife Division staff in seeking an explanation of how the mistaken conversion of the private land antlerless sales deer hunting licenses over the lottery drawing occurred. He believes the DNR should also use the previous three to five years experience as the primary indicator to determine if, in fact, there is over-demand and necessary change.

Chauncy Moran stated a male Kirtland's warbler has been found in the Yellow Dog Watershed near the Kennecott site.

Kristi Mills, Save the Wild UP, said she has lived in the UP for approximately 30 years. She does not believe bringing sulfide mining to the UP will solve any economic issues.

Cynthia Pryor, Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve, stated that the Marquette County Road Commission has a best practice and standard to keep the right-of-ways clear and claims that Kennecott will install utilities in the shoulder of the road. She asked that Director Humphries and Director Chester meet to work out issues that are being done outside of the permitted activities.

Richard Smith, Marquette, asked the NRC to reverse its UP antler restriction regulations decision as he believes they will result in reduced hunting recreation.

Bryan Reynolds, UP Whitetails of Marquette County, thanked the NRC for their decision on buck regulations in the UP.

Eric Navares, Munising, believes that tribal fishing in Munising Bay is destroying fishing in the Bay. He requested either less netting or more fish plants.

Jack Herrick, Rapid River, opposes bear hunting regulations in the UP and believes the bear population is being mismanaged.

Judy McCreavy, Oxford, thanked DNR staff for lowering antlerless licenses in Roscommon County.

Ed Nellist, Roscommon County Commission, said he appreciates the work of the Wildlife Division. However, he believes the deer population numbers being used need updating.

Johnny Lucas, Trenary, has fished and hunted for many years and asked what could be done to avoid hunters getting inappropriately accused of poaching.

Larry Paxton, Roscommon County Road Commission, supports Axiom Entertainment purchasing property in Grayling for an amusement park.

Alan Diodore, AuSable North Branch Association and Foundation, opposes Axiom Entertainment purchasing property in Grayling for an amusement park.

Mark Nordia, asked for a one percent increase in nonresident bear permits to allow nonresidents to hunt bear in Michigan. He also said the new antlerless regulations will make it more difficult to harvest an antlerless deer.

Jamie Greer, Grayling, supports Axiom Entertainment purchasing property in Grayling for an amusement park and is willing to put up with inconveniences as long as the economy is stimulated.

Gary Modlin, UP Whitetails of Marquette County, supports the buck license regulations recently approved by the NRC.

Paul Compo, Crawford County Administrator, supports Axiom Entertainment purchasing property in Grayling for an amusement park. He agrees that financing should in place prior to any decisions being made.

Kay Cosgray, Michigan Works! Crawford and Oscoda Counties, supports Axiom Entertainment purchasing property in Grayling for an amusement park.

Dennis Carlson, UP Whitetails of Alger County, said there may be opposition to the new antlerless deer regulations in the UP.

Terry Wright, Grayling Township Supervisor, supports Axiom Entertainment purchasing property in Grayling for an amusement park.

Nancy Warren, Ewen, supports the Michigan Wolf Management Plan and believes it will assure adequate protection for the wolf while managing to minimize conflict.

Jim VanderLaan, Lake City, supports Axiom Entertainment purchasing property in Grayling for an amusement park and believes it will stimulate the economy.

Marci Cella, Baraga County, complimented Fisheries Division's staff in the Baraga Office for heading up a group to restore Lake Superior's Huron River. She asked that the DNR Baraga Office remain intact."

Gaila Gililand, Crawford County Economic Development, presented a petition signed by 2,090 individuals in support of the Axiom Entertainment project.

John Novak, Grayling, opposes Axiom Entertainment purchasing property in Grayling for an amusement park.

Sam Houston, Grayling, supports Axiom Entertainment purchasing property in Grayling for an amusement park.

Chad McCurdy, Frederic, opposes Axiom Entertainment purchasing property in Grayling for an amusement park.

The Public Appearances portion of the meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m. and the Regular Meeting convened immediately following.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – JUNE 5, 2008 NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION MEETING

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

EARLY SEASON WATERFOWL HUNTING REGULATIONS, WILDLIFE CONSERVATION ORDER, AMENDMENT NO. 11 OF 2008

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

ANTLERLESS DEER LICENSE QUOTAS, WILDLIFE CONSERVATION ORDER AMENDMENT NO. 12 OF 2008

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

Commissioner Madigan made a motion, supported by Commissioner Richardson, to amend the recommended antlerless license quota for DMU 072 (Roscommon County) to zero licenses for public and private land. Doug Reeves, Chief, Wildlife Division, cautioned lowering licenses to zero.

Roll call was taken: Voting Yes: Commissioners Madigan, Richardson, Coleman and Charters. Voting No: Commissioners Earley and Brown. Motion passed 4-2.

On the motion to approve the Antlerless Deer License Quotas, Wildlife Conservation Order, Amendment No. 12 of 2008, as amended, roll call was taken. Voting Yes: Commissioners Brown, Coleman, Richardson, Madigan and Charters. Voting No: Commissioner Earley. Motion passed 5-1.

Director Humphries requested that staff work with the Roscommon County citizens to provide information and develop population quotas for the 2009 hunting season.

DIRECTOR'S ACTION ITEMS

Director Humphries stated her intent to approve all Director's Action items on the Agenda.

Director Humphries requested that staff provide annual reports on the status of the wolf population in Michigan. She commended the Wolf Round Table for their efforts.

Commissioner Madigan commented on land transactions in the Pigeon River Country Management Unit, Traverse City Management Unit and Cadillac Management Unit and said they were good transactions.

NRC POLICY COMMITTEE REPORTS

Joint NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries and Finance and Administration Meeting: This meeting was held at 1:00 p.m. on July 10, 2008 in Munising. The Minutes are attached.

COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

Commissioner Earley commended staff for being on the right track with the monthly spend plan and finance reporting.

Commissioner Coleman requested more detail on outreach spending. This will be an agenda item for the August NRC Policy Committee on Parks and Recreation.

Commissioner Madigan reminded staff that they are to set bear season regulations and quotas earlier than in past years and asked what the status of those discussions are. Doug Reeves responded the meetings are being scheduled on this issue.

Commissioner Earley thanked the DNR staff for assistance given to the City of Saginaw doing storm clean-up. Staff's assistance was very valuable.

Commissioner Earley asked for assurance by Axiom Entertainment that all of the questions that the DNR and NRC may have on their proposal are answered.

Commissioner Madigan thanked the NRC and staff for coming to Munising.

Chairman Charters thanked Commissioner Madigan for hosting the NRC meeting in Munising.

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The meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Joint Meeting of the NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries and the NRC Policy Committee on Finance and Administration

The meeting convened at 1:00 p.m.

What's happening in Lake Superior

Steve Scott, Fisheries Division, presented an update on Lake Superior. Lake Superior is unique from other Great Lakes, most species are native, more of a natural process occurs within the lake which remains fairly stable and in good condition. Lake Trout stocks crashed at one point so a state stocking program was begun to enhance natural reproduction. Stocking stopped around 1996 and the population has remained stable. Lake Trout is the major sport fish and catch rate has remained stable over time. Coho is the second most popular and the catch rate is fairly stable and naturally reproducing in a variety of streams. Splake is being stocked which is a hybrid between Brook Trout and lake trout. Angler pressure has declined and as a result Lake Trout harvest has also declined. Forage biomass is getting lower and predators are challenging the forage base. Sea Lamprey population is up. The US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is putting significant amount of money into control to help bring down to target range. We have a new research vessel as of April 2007 that was built in Michigan. It is bigger than the old vessel so it allows use on Lake Superior, and the crew was able to go to Isle Royale for the first time to perform surveys.

Waterfowl Season Regulations

Presented by Doug Reeves, Wildlife Division

Doug Reeves, Acting Chief, Wildlife Division, discussed the migratory bird regulations. Setting regulations involves the Mississippi Flyway Council (MFC). In March the MFC makes recommendations at the Citizens' Waterfowl Advisory Council (CWAC) meeting. In June of each year, the USFWS holds a regulations meeting to put together early season frame work which the state can choose (youth hunt and early season). In July, information is presented on surveys in pothole region, another MFC meeting is held for information on late season frame work. In August, the NRC sets regulations based on all of the above.

Canada Goose Status

There are three primarily populations hunted in Michigan: the Mississippi Valley Population (MVP); Southern James Bay (SJB); and Midwest Giants. This year there was a later spring farther north affecting breeding. The MVP population is down, the SJB population is stable, and Midwest giants population stable or a slight decline. Michigan is at the upper end of the desired range of Midwest giants in Michigan so the DNR is asking for an increase in harvest opportunities during the early season. Seventy-six percent of Michigan's harvest are generally Giants, and only three percent SJB. Proposed goose management units are like general waterfowl units (north, middle and south zone). If this idea passes through the MFC, the issue will be slated for action at the August, 2008 NRC meeting.

Duck Season

The Michigan duck harvest of mallards (48 percent) and wood ducks (11 percent) has been steady over the past few years. Over 50 percent of the Michigan mallard harvest comes from the Great Lakes breeding population which tracks well with Great Lakes water levels. The 2008 habitat conditions generally are not as good as they have been over the past several years. As such, we might see a recommendation for a shorter waterfowl season. In August, the CWAC will meet to discuss options on bag limits and season dates.

Crossbow Regulations

Lt. Jane Gordon, Law Enforcement Division, reviewed the Crossbow Disability Work Group which is to revise and propose updates to crossbow permits for hunters with disabilities. The Work Group includes representatives from the medical community. Currently only those with 80 percent permanent disabilities are allowed to use a crossbow in bow season and approximately 20,000 qualify. She reviewed the Work Group proposal which includes automatic eligibility for categories such as amputees, etc. The medical community proposed use of three tests for eligibility: functional draw test, manual muscle test, and impaired range of motion test. Physicians would decide and consider eligibility for less than 80 percent disability. Work group would also like to see use for temporary disabilities as well as permanent. Ten or 11 other states in the United States where crossbows can be used with or without disabilities. Since the Work Group charge is to address disabilities rather than age issues. However, with the proposed permit changes, more seniors would qualify based on ability or inability to pull a regular bow. There is pending Legislation relative to crossbows that would allow crossbow use for everyone. The House of Representatives passed this legislation with strong support.

Antlerless Deer Quota Recommendations

Doug Reeves stated the antlerless deer quota recommendations was presented to the NRC at the June meeting. At that meeting, Roscommon County Commissioners asked for a zero antlerless quota. Mr. Reeves spoke to many people and reviewed data. The general understanding among the public in the area is it is an issue of have/have nots. The southern portion of the area (vicinity of Mid-Forest Lodge) has plenty of deer while the large blocks of public land do not have as many. Forest managers indicate no regeneration problems except a few locations where people feed deer. This unit has been a challenge for a long time. It was one of the units in which archers were required to have an antlerless license during an experimental years ago and it appears that archery harvest is significant there now as well. He recommended 500 public and 1000 private which is half the original recommendation and indicated that the data from antlerless harvest would help to get more bio-data for sex-age-kill.

Antlerless Guides

There were a substantial amount of errors in the table showing open/closed units. A correction sheet will be going out next week. Regarding the sale of private land licenses, there are issues with the software program that takes a license away just by querying the system and doesn't give it back. This can be fixed, at least in part, but perhaps not completely. A new system is coming out in 2010 that will eliminate the problem. The programming is old and done by someone else and is very expensive to modify. Question: Is this a real problem? Biologically we have gotten around this for years.

Budget Report

Sharon Schafer, Chief, Office of Budget and Support Services, said the purpose of preparing monthly reports is to make the public aware what the DNR is spending, on what and what funds are available. There is more flexibility this fiscal year to spend money. There are still limitations on out-of-state travel but the DNR has been able to spend money on Full Time Equivalents (FTEs) and equipment and have hired 30 employees within the last quarter. The DNR's spending is very heavily weighted to the last quarter. There is, however, very little cushion within the State Park development fund. The report in its entirety is available on the DNR website under "Inside the DNR".

The meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

Approved: _____

Keith J. Charters, Chair

Rebecca A. Humphries, Director