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GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
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DANIEL EICHINGER
DIRECTOR

SUBMITTED: October 14, 2019
RESUBMITTED: November 12, 2019

APPROVED
_____, 20____
MICHIGAN NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

(ASSISTANT TO THE COMMISSION)

MEMORANDUM TO THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

Subject: Open and Closed Hunting Areas at Yankee Springs State Recreation Area
Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 10 of 2019

Authority:

The Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451, authorizes the Director and the Commission to issue orders to manage wild animals in this state.

Discussion and Background:

Yankee Springs State Recreation Area, with 5,200 acres, is centrally located between Grand Rapids and Kalamazoo on the east side of US 131 in southwest Michigan's Lower Peninsula. The Yankee Springs State Recreation Area encompasses many lakes and is a year-round destination for visitors with a variety of recreational interests, including hunting, camping, fishing, hiking, mountain biking, and horseback riding.

The Yankee Springs State Recreation Area provides extensive land open to hunting. About 3,500 of the area's 5,200 acres are open to hunting during the established open hunting seasons. In addition, Yankee Springs State Recreation Area is adjacent to the Barry State Game Area which is a managed wildlife and public hunting area. In combination with the adjoining Barry State Game Area, Yankee Springs State Recreation Area provides 22,000 acres of public open space and wildlife habitat, making it a destination for hunters. Wildlife is abundant, with deer, turkey, and waterfowl hunting being the most popular. Small game hunting is primarily for rabbit, squirrel, woodcock, and ruffed grouse. The wild turkey population is also becoming very well established.

Open Areas around Chief Noonday Lake and Baker Lake to Hunting

In Michigan, a State Recreation Area is open to hunting unless otherwise noted in the Wildlife Conservation Order. Currently, there are two areas around Chief Noonday Lake and Baker Lake at Yankee Springs State Recreation Area that are closed to hunting. In order to provide additional recreational opportunities for hunters and benefit the recreation area for all visitors,

the Department recommends opening approximately 350 acres to hunting during the established open hunting seasons.

Issues Pros and Cons

These recommended changes are intended to provide more hunting opportunities within the Yankee Springs State Recreation Area. During the open hunting season, majority of the Yankee Springs State Recreation Area campsites near Chief Noonday Lake and Baker Lake are predominately utilized by hunters. Hunters utilizing these areas will have easier and more convenient access to open hunting areas. This may also alleviate over-crowded hunting spots in those areas currently open to hunting.

One of the recreation area purposes outlined in the approved Yankee Springs State Recreation Area Management Plan (Plan) is to provide access to diverse intensive and extensive recreational opportunities, including hunting. In addition, one of the general action goals outlined in the Plan is to maintain and enhance opportunities for hunting in conjunction with Barry State Game Area. Opening additional hunting areas meets this goal.

There are two historical sites located within the Yankee Springs State Recreation Area, one of them being the Chief Noonday Outdoor Center located near Chief Noonday Lake. There may be some safety concerns associated with opening this area to hunting, however all safety zone regulations (no hunting within 450 feet of an occupied building) apply.

Other States

The Department does not see any relevance with this change regarding other states.

Biological

Hunting will continue to play a role in the conservation of the natural resources at Yankee Springs State Recreation Area. The Department does not expect a biological impact.

Social

The Wildlife Division, Parks and Recreation Division, and Law Enforcement Division held an open house on July 10, 2019, and had only received positive comments about opening these areas to hunting. In addition, opening these areas to hunting will provide additional opportunities to harvest game.

Economic

The Department expects that the additional hunting opportunities will result in more recreational use of Yankee Springs State Recreation Area.

Closing an Area on Long Lake to Hunting

The Department recommends closing approximately four acres of land along the northwest corner of Long Lake to hunting. Currently, majority of Long Lake is closed to hunting and over the years, this has caused many enforcement issues because many hunters are not aware of where

the legal hunting area is on the lake. Closing this small section of Long Lake to hunting will close the entire lake to hunting and eliminate enforcement issues.

Issues Pros and Cons

This recommended change is intended to alleviate enforcement issues associated with the confusion of where the legal hunting area is on Long Lake.

Currently, the majority of Long Lake is closed to hunting besides a small portion in the northwest corner of the lake. Closing off the entire lake to hunting will provide consistency in regulations surrounding the lake, as well as eliminating enforcement issues associated with the confusion of where the legal hunting area is on the lake.

This may cause confusion to hunters who use that spot for hunting, but the Department will post signs indicating that the area can no longer be used for hunting purposes.

Other States

The Department does not see any relevance with this change regarding other states.

Biological

The Department does not expect a biological impact.

Social

The Wildlife Division, Parks and Recreation Division, and Law Enforcement Division held an open house on July 10, 2019, and had only received positive comments about closing this area to hunting. In addition, closing this area to hunting will eliminate enforcement issues.

Economic

The Department does not expect an economic impact.

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November 12, 2019

Relevant Divisions have contributed to the preparation of this order. This order was submitted for information on November 7, 2019, at the Natural Resources Commission meeting. This item appeared on the Department's October calendar and may be eligible for approval on December 12, 2019.

Rex Ainslie, Acting Chief
Wildlife Division

Gary Hagler, Chief
Law Enforcement Division

Deb Begalle, Chief
Forest Resources Division

Ronald A. Olson, Chief
Parks and Recreation Division

James Dexter, Chief
Fisheries Division

Shannon Hanna
Natural Resources Deputy

I have analyzed and discussed these recommendations with staff and concur as to matters over which the Director has authority.

Daniel Eichinger, Director

Date

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION ORDER

Amendment No. 10 of 2019

By authority conferred on the Natural Resources Commission and the Director of the Department of Natural Resources by sections 40107 and 40113a of 1994 PA 451, MCL 324.40107 and 324.40113a, it is ordered that effective December 13, 2019, the following section(s) of the Wildlife Conservation Order shall read as follows:

7.59 Yankee springs recreation area, hunting prohibited; posting required.

Sec. 7.59 (1) A person shall not take an animal from those lands of the Yankee springs recreation area described as follows:

(a) All lands in section 27 lying north of Gun lake road and west of Bassett road; the SW 1/4 of section 21 lying southwest of McDonald lake trail and a 300 foot buffer along the waters edge of Long lake in the SE 1/4 of the SE 1/4 of section 20, all of section 28 lying north of Gun lake road and southwest and southeast of the forked snowmobile path; and all of sections 29 and 32, T3N, R10W, Yankee springs township, all in Barry county.

(2) Signs containing the hunting closure shall be posted in such a manner and at such locations as will provide reasonable notice of the closure to the public.

Issued on this 12th day of December, 2019.

Approved as to matters over which the Natural Resources Commission has authority.

Vicki J. Pontz, Chair
Natural Resources Commission

Approved as to matters over which the Director has authority.

Daniel Eichinger
Director