

## **Preliminary Report of Ad Hoc NRC Committee Regarding Sub-Committee Structure and Operations**

August 6, 2021

Chairperson Carol Rose appointed the undersigned as an ad hoc committee to review the Natural Resource Commission's committee structure and procedures for gathering input from Department of Natural Resources staff and other interested parties. We have discussed this matter with several DNR staff members, the other commissioners, and the immediate past NRC Chair. This status report is provided so that Commissioners, staff and the public can provide input which can then be incorporated into the ad hoc committee's final recommendations.

Under Michigan law, fish and wildlife are deemed of paramount importance. Hunting, fishing and trapping should be forever preserved. The NRC has been granted exclusive authority to regulate the taking of sport fish and game. It also has the duty to advise the Director of the DNR on matters related to natural resources and conservation in general. In doing so, it must utilize principles of sound scientific management. To that end, it has the authority to take testimony from department personnel, independent experts and others, and to independently review scientific literature and data and other sources.

To implement these obligations and authorities, the NRC created several committees over the years, and participated on additional committees, task forces, work groups and advisory bodies. Several of these committees held meetings, took testimony, and gathered scientific data and stakeholder input for consideration by the full Commission in the furtherance of its duties. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and other reasons, those meetings were suspended. The question now is how best to structure the NRC's committees to provide for fully informed decision making on a timely and efficient basis.

Several ideas have been suggested. All would require working closely with DNR staff and resource professionals, as well as modification of the current meeting format and agenda. They can be summarized as follows:

1. Reduce the number of standing committees to three, e.g., fisheries, wildlife, and policy and governance, incorporating the functions of the other committees into these three.
2. Establish additional committees of greatest importance.
3. Retain the entire 2019 committee structure.
4. Implement ad hoc committees and/or workgroups to supplement the work of the standing committees.
5. Do this work as a committee of the whole, without the aid of standing committees.

The ad hoc committee's charge is to examine ways in which to structure and align committees with the current regulatory and advisory responsibilities of the NRC, and to recommend related modifications to the NRC meeting format and other operational aspects of the Commission. The committee has been mindful of ways in which to maintain and expand upon the public's ability to provide input regarding the management and conservation of Michigan's public trust resources by providing diverse venues for dialogue on an ongoing basis and for the submission of formal public comment and expert testimony to the NRC and DNR. Our goal is to structure and operate the NRC so that Commissioners have the information necessary to make timely and well informed decisions in a transparent manner and with robust ongoing public involvement.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tom Baird, Commissioner  
Dave Cozad, Commissioner