

Michigan Natural Resources Commission

Recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee Regarding Sub-Committee Structure and Operations

September 10, 2021

Chairperson Carol Rose appointed the undersigned as an ad hoc committee of the Michigan Natural Resources Commission to review the NRC's sub-committee structure and related operational issues. Input was received from all commissioners, DNR staff and other stakeholders. A preliminary report was presented at the NRC meeting of August 12, 2021, after which additional input was received. These constitute our recommendations.

Recommendations

1. Three standing committees, each comprised of three commissioners appointed by the chairperson, should be established at this time. (This does not preclude the creation of additional standing committees in the future.) The purpose of the committees is to identify issues, liaise with DNR staff, arrange for input from independent experts and stakeholders, review scientific literature and data, review regulatory issues within the jurisdiction of the NRC, and ensure that principles of sound scientific management are used in the NRC's decision-making process and advisory role. The standing committees we propose are:

a. Policy and Governance Committee: deal with internal governance matters, policies and procedures, annual planning, governmental matters involving the NRC (including tribal reports and discussions regarding tribal matters), legal issues and litigation, and identification of issues requiring follow-up which are not within the purview of other committees.

b. Fisheries Committee: consider all matters germane to that area, including proposed fisheries orders and other related matters.

c. Wildlife Committee: consider all matters germane to that area, including proposed wildlife orders and other related matters.

2. Ad hoc committees should be convened by the chairperson from time to time, on a temporary basis, as circumstances dictate. Their work might involve areas not sufficiently covered by the standing committees such as matters involving more than one DNR division (e.g., forestry practices and wildlife habitat), emerging issues (e.g., climate change and what it means for our natural resources and regulation of fish and wildlife), etc.

3. Meetings of the committees will be open to the public. Hopefully, virtual meetings can be used to facilitate committee work. Notes or minutes will be kept by the Executive Assistant to the NRC. It is understood that individual members of the committees may undertake their duties without the formality of a meeting. The standing committees could meet during the morning of each NRC meeting. Not all standing committees would need to meet each month. During formal committee meetings members of the DNR staff, experts and others may be invited to present information, data and scientific literature for consideration. Discourse will be limited to these individuals and the committee members. Members of the public and other commissioners will be welcome to provide input and comments at the appropriate times during the regular meeting of the NRC.

We are presented with an opportunity to improve our information gathering and decision making processes. Under Michigan law, fish and wildlife are deemed of paramount importance and part of the public trust. Hunting, fishing and trapping are to be preserved. The NRC has the 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 conservation in general. In doing so the NRC must use principles of sound scientific management. To that end, the NRC has the authority to take testimony from department staff, independent experts and others, and to independently review scientific literature and other resources.

Over the years the NRC has appointed numerous committees, task forces and workgroups to help it accomplish these tasks. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and other reasons, those meetings were suspended, some of the groups fell into disuse, and others have served their purpose. This gives us a chance to revise our sub-committee structure, streamline it and at the same time ensure that we have the best information available for consideration in our regulatory and advisory roles. Hopefully these recommendations will serve that purpose.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Baird, Commissioner
Dave Cozad, Commissioner