



**Accessibility Advisory Council
Minutes**

Aug. 13, 2024

**DNR Outdoor Adventure Center,
1801 Atwater St,
Detroit, MI 48207**

Accessibility Advisory Council Members

PRESENT	ABSENT
Bryan Wilkinson, Co-Chair	Scott Norris, Chair
Cindy Burkhour	Kimberly Woolridge
Jessica Stark	Ken Buchholtz
Billy Vickers	Michael Harris
Robert Winn	
Duncan Wyeth	
Yasmina Bouraoui	
Tyra Khan	
Will Purves	
Tina Nowakowski	
Allen Beauchamp	

Present for the Department of Natural Resources

Kristin Phillips, Deputy Director
Stacy Welling Haughey, UP AAC sponsor
Jolene Haines, Public Information Office
Brenda Henige, ADA accessibility coordinator

Present for the DNR Accessibility Team (A-Team)

David Haupt, A-Team co-chair, Marketing and Outreach Division
Michelle O'Kelly, A-Team co-chair, Parks and Recreation Division
Charamy Cleary, Finance and Operations Division
Amy Price, Marketing and Outreach Division

Others:

Jim Rudicil, Executive Director, Muskegon Luge Adventure Sports Park
Gary Kirsh, ITC Holdings, friend of DNR Outdoor Adventure Center

Regular Meeting

Opening remarks

Bryan Wilkinson called the meeting to order at 12:05 p.m. and welcomed everyone to the Aug. 13, 2024 Accessibility Advisory Council meeting. Bryan Wilkinson took roll call.

Approval of minutes

Bryan Wilkinson asked the council members if they had any additions, corrections or discussion regarding the Feb. 13, 2024, minutes. Bryan Wilkinson requested a motion to approve the minutes as written. Cindy Burkhour motioned to approve, and Allen Beauchamp seconded the motion. The motion unanimously carried, and the minutes were approved.

NRC Liberty and Independence Hunt changes

Members of the council voiced concern over not having been included in the process that led to Natural Resources Commission approval of these hunt changes. Jessica Stark noted that she feels the AAC was late to the party on this, and by the time the council had heard about it the decision had already been made. She asked how the council can better be included in decisions that affect people with disabilities.

Will Purves echoed Jessica's sentiments. He said that in the past, when decisions are being made that affect people with disabilities and relate to DNR programs, this council has often been involved in discussion at the conceptual and informative stages rather than the tail end of the discussions.

Stacy Welling Haughey noted that a news release went out statewide calling for applications from people who would like to serve on a group to bring recommendations forward to the NRC. There were 2,600 applications, which were vetted by the DNR. Anyone could apply and it was a very open process. The initiative focused on every type of season and hunt, and so the DNR did not know what the recommendations would be.

Kristin Phillips noted that takeaways from today's discussion include better communication between commissions and advisory boards and internal adjustments to make better connections between DNR staff who assist with commissions and councils. Stacy also recommended council members sign up for GovDelivery bulletins by specific areas of interest, which will help communications efforts, and inviting NRC members to future AAC meetings.

Cindy Burkhour suggested writing a letter to the NRC stating the position of the AAC regarding the decision, noting that the council is not in favor of the changes, and explaining its reasoning for the opinion. She suggested including the council's knowledge and opinion on how the decision will affect people with disabilities. Cindy moved that the council drafts the letter. The motion was seconded by Will Purves. The motion passed unanimously.

Trust Fund proposal presentation

Jim Rudicil, Executive Director, Muskegon Luge Adventure Sports Park, presented on a Michigan Natural Resource Trust Fund grant for a universally accessible canopy tour at the sports park.

The project includes building the first-of-its-kind adventure canopy tour consisting of three accessible course levels (easy, moderate and difficult) with boardwalks, rope bridges, decks and challenge elements. The project connects accessible pathways to all other recreation venues and includes interpretive signage with tactile samples of surrounding nature and wildlife. The canopy tour course and associated work have a project cost of \$700,000.

This is phase 2 of the park, with the first phase consisting of the first universally accessible luge park, opened in 2009, and expanded with an archery program. It contains the longest dual zipline in Michigan with full accessibility, including an accessible rock-climbing facility. All staff attends sensitivity and accessibility training as well.

Jessica Stark made a motion to recommend that the AAC provides a letter of recommendation to promote this project as endorsed by this council to go with their application to the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board for the granting process. Tina Nowakowski seconded it. Will Purves abstained. The motion passed.

Department updates

Mentored hunting program updates

Brenda Henige provided the group with an update on the mentored hunting program, noting that the bill was passed 57-37, passed unanimously by the Senate, and was signed by Gov. Whitmer and granted immediate authority. Called the inclusive mentored license, it can be obtained beginning Aug. 1 and used this fall.

LED visor cards

Brenda Henige updated the council on the DNR Law Enforcement Division visor cards. She noted that LED's visor cards were finalized a couple of month ago and printed. They are now being distributed to the more than 250 conservation officers located throughout the state. The communications cards have symbols on them so that conservation officers can pull out the laminated cards when needed to improve communication with the public. Similar cards are being created for use in customer service centers throughout the state.

Council business

DNR Director Bowen is confirmed to virtually attend the Dec. 10 meeting.

AAC member recruitment

Brenda Henige said there are three vacant openings on the AAC for the following: military/veterans, deaf and hard of hearing community, tribal community.

DiverseAbility Days at state parks

A DiversAbility day was added, called DiversAbility Dunes Day. The date is Sept. 11 at Silver Lake State Park near Mears.

AAC inquiries

Brenda Henige received phone calls and letters from the public regarding AAC inquiries. She received a phone call requesting that all DNR facilities with public boat launches have lifts. The caller also recommended having more parking areas with accessible spaces near hunting areas. An email she received was from a resident of North Carolina who grew up in Michigan. The writer is on a North Carolina accessibility advisory council and is impressed with this ACC. The sender asked if there could be a way to create a discounted hunting licenses for out-of-state residents who have disabilities. It was noted by council members that this would need to be legislated and that Michigan residents with disabilities do not receive a discount.

Closing business

The next council meeting is Dec. 10, at the Rose Lake Shooting Range/Glassen Shooting Education Center, 14500 Peacock Road, East Lansing.

Adjourn

Bryan Wilkinson requested a motion to adjourn. Duncan Wyeth motioned for adjournment, and Cindy Burkhour seconded the motion. The motion unanimously carried, and the meeting adjourned at 2:07 p.m.