



## ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

### MINUTES

August 24, 2021

### VIRTUAL MEETING

#### ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COUNCIL (AAC)

##### PRESENT

Scott Norris, Chair  
Tom Jones, Co-Chair  
Cindy Burkhour  
Vendela Collins  
Michael Harris  
Justin Lippe  
Neal McKenzie  
Sarah Peurakoski  
Will Purves  
Jessica Stark  
Billy Vickers  
Bryan Wilkinson  
Robert Winn  
Kim Woolridge  
Duncan Wyeth

##### ABSENT

Ken Buchholtz

#### PRESENT FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES (DNR)

Sharon Schafer, AAC Sponsor  
Stacy Haughey, Upper Peninsula AAC Sponsor/Field Deputy  
Alexis Hermiz, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer  
Michael Holsinger, ADA Coordinator  
Yolanda Taylor, Assistant to the AAC

#### PRESENT FROM THE DNR ACCESSIBILITY TEAM (A-TEAM)

Andrea Stay, Grants Management  
Sgt. Mike Mshar, Law Enforcement  
David Haupt, *A-Team Chair*, and Cindy Krueger, *A-Team Co-Chair*, Marketing and Outreach  
Diana Paiz, Michigan History Center  
Michelle OKelly, Parks and Recreation  
Ryan Soulard, Wildlife

#### INTERPRETERS

Andi Chumley and Janna Rowan  
Kate Miller, Closed Captioner

#### PRESENTERS:

Laura Hall and Jileesa Irwin, Michigan Disability Rights Coalition  
Ryan Engle and Julie Cortright, Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency

## REGULAR MEETING

### INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Norris called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and welcomed everyone to another virtual meeting of the Accessibility Advisory Council (council). He gave a brief overview of how the meeting would be conducted, including meeting protocols, and asked for everyone's patience as we work through this virtual format.

The Chair then took roll call.

### ADOPTION OF AMENDED BYLAWS

Chair Norris reported that members of the council met and amended the bylaws to allow meetings of the council to be held, in whole or in part, either in-person or electronically by telephonic or video conferencing, or a combination thereof. The amendments also confirm that members participating in-person or electronically via conference call or a virtual meeting platform, or a combination thereof, are deemed to be present at the meeting for the purpose of constituting a quorum and taking action.

The amended bylaws were distributed to council members for their review prior to the meeting. Chair Norris asked if the members had any questions or concerns regarding the amended bylaws; none were offered. He then asked for a motion to adopt the amended bylaws.

***Duncan motioned to adopt the bylaws as amended; Tom seconded the motion; the motion unanimously carried, and the amended bylaws were adopted.***

### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chair Norris asked the council if they had any additions, corrections, or discussion regarding the May 18, 2021, Minutes. No additional corrections, edits or discussion was offered.

Chair Norris requested a motion to approve the May 18, 2021, Minutes.

***Duncan Wyeth motioned to approve the Minutes; Cindy Burkhour seconded the motion; the motion unanimously carried, and the May 2021 Minutes were approved.***

### MICHIGAN DISABILITY RIGHTS COALITION PRESENTATION

Laura Hall, Assistive Technology (AT) Program Director, and Jileesa Irwin, AT for Outdoor Recreation Specialist, with the Michigan Disability Rights Coalition (MDRC) gave the council an overview of the MDRC and the federally-funded Michigan Assistive Technology Program (MATP).

AT is any item, piece of equipment, software or product that is used to help people with disabilities, including older adults, engage in activities. The MATP provides AT-related support around the state, hands-on demonstrations of AT devices, awareness information, training, and a loan program through [ATXchange.org](http://ATXchange.org). They gave an overview of various AT equipment they have available.

They also gave an overview of their new Outdoor Recreation Program, where they loan out equipment on a short-term basis. They provide individualized demonstrations of AT equipment that will assist that person in participating in the desired outdoor recreational activity. Available equipment includes electric bikes such as the Liberty Trike, Rad Runner 1, and the Lectric Step-Thru 2.0, all ranging in speeds from 12 mph to 28 mph, that can travel anywhere from

eight to 45 miles or three to eight hours, depending on the model and charge. They also offer AT equipment for hunting, fishing, and birdwatching.

MDCR envisions a world where people with disabilities and older adults can live a full life.

The council and the presenters engaged in discussions about various equipment that is being manufactured that could be very useful to people with disabilities. They further discussed availability and funding. The MDCR cannot directly purchase equipment for a person, but they do assist them with finding equipment and funding sources.

Sarah Peurakoski commented that her organization, SAIL (Superior Alliance for Independent Living) has worked with MDCR in the past. They have 16 adaptive bikes in the Upper Peninsula available for use. She will reach out to MDCR to collaborate on activities for the Upper Peninsula. She also commented that manufacturers are building some really cool products, but they can be very expensive.

Vendela Collins asked if any of this AT equipment is covered under insurances. MDCR responded that, if the equipment is not medically required, it could be difficult to get insurance to cover the equipment.

Jessica Stark commented that, being a recreational therapist who works with auto accident survivors, she has written letters of necessity to show how a certain piece of equipment would contribute to their rehabilitative process and has had some successes in getting insurances to cover the costs, partially or in whole.

Duncan Wyeth also commented that the Veterans Administration (VA) provides hand cycles to qualifying wounded warriors. Perhaps the VA would also be willing to fund any AT bikes that are e-assist. [Wounded Warriors](#) is another amazing organization that provide AT, and not just for veterans; they also assist anybody with a disability. They have done a lot of work finding low-cost items for fishing or hunting or do-it-yourself AT for outdoor recreation.

Anybody interested in requesting a demo of their equipment can call 1-800-578-0280 or by filling out a request on-line at [Request an Assistive Technology \(AT\) Demonstration Survey \(surveymonkey.com\)](#).

The MDCR would appreciate more ideas from the council of items they could add to their programs. They look forward to continuing to work with the council and the department in creating partnerships that will get more people in the outdoors. They invited council members and department staff to contact them to share ideas. They can be reached at 517-333-2477 or by email at: Jileesa Irwin at [jileesa@mymdrc.org](mailto:jileesa@mymdrc.org); or Laura Hall at [laura@mymdrc.org](mailto:laura@mymdrc.org).

The council thanked Jileesa and Laura for their presentation.

### **MICHIGAN VETERANS AFFAIRS AGENCY PRESENTATION**

Ryan Engle, Partnership Coordinator, and Julie Cortright, Health and Welfare Analyst, with the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency (MVAA), gave the council an overview of their agency, which was established in 2013 to coordinate and connect veterans and families to the benefits they have earned, resources, and services they need, and their role in the [Governor's and Mayor's Challenges to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans and Their Families](#).

Ryan explained that the [Michigan Veterans Trust Fund](#) was established to assist with emergency grants for qualified veterans facing financial hardships. The MVAA also administers the Veteran Readiness and Employment program to assist veterans with service-related disabilities to prepare for, find and keep suitable jobs. The MVAA administers many more

programs to assist veterans and their families, to include assistance with employment, education, health and welfare services, emergency assistance, programs for women veterans, and programs that focus on quality of life, among many more. They are a small agency that provides resources and services to over 567,000 Michigan veterans and their families, with a key focus on outreach.

Michigan veterans or their families that need assistance should call the 24/7 hotline at 1-800-MICHVET (or 1-800-642-4838) or visit their website at [michigan.gov/mvaa/](http://michigan.gov/mvaa/).

Julie Cortright explained the Governor's and Mayor's Challenges to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans and Their Families. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has partnered with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to bring the Governor's and Mayor's to states and communities across the nation. For the Governor's Challenge, 35 states are taking part in the challenge and are working to develop and implement statewide suicide prevention best practices for service members, veterans, and their families (SMVF), using a public health approach. For the Mayor's Challenge, 22 communities were originally engaged as part of the challenge. Currently, 19 Mayor's Challenge teams are actively participating, with 17 of the communities being within Governor's Challenge states. Michigan is one of the 22 states participating in the Governor's Challenge.

The objective of this challenge is to convene a state or city/community interagency military and civilian team of leaders to develop and implement a plan to prevent suicide among SMVF that will advance the VA's National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide and incorporate evidence-based strategies for the CDC's Preventing Suicide package of policy, programs, and practices. Other objectives include:

- Implement promising, best, and evidence-based practices to prevent and reduce suicide.
- Engage with city, county, and state stakeholders to enhance and align local and state-wide suicide prevention efforts.
- Understand the issues surrounding suicide prevention for SMVF.
- Increase knowledge about the challenges and lessons learned in implementing best policies and practices by using state-to-state and community-to-community sharing.
- Employ promising, best, and evidence-based practices to prevent and reduce suicide at the local level.
- Define and measure success, including defining assignments, deadlines, and measurable outcomes to be reported.

The MVAA has joined the challenge and currently has 40 different partners across the State of Michigan to look at ways to prevent suicide among service members and their families. They are looking at championing a few initiatives with priorities to spread awareness of how and why to connect veterans to their earned benefits. They are doing a lot of outreach encouraging organizations to participate. They provide information and toolkits that organizations can pass out to veterans or their families to connect them to these resources. Their priorities include 1) suicide prevention and lowering the risk of suicides, overdose, and other self-harming behaviors, 2) transition of care, and 3) outreach to gun shops, ranges, etc. asking them to become a veteran connector by offering gun storage, gun locks and informational materials. They also have a volunteer program called [Check on MiVet](#), and free training with ten different veteran-centered programs to include information on suicide prevention, continuing education credits, and on-site training for organizations and communities.

Ryan added that he also worked at the Jacobetti Home for Veterans where he realized the number of veterans that are not aware of the benefits they have earned in service. It takes a

village to assist and service those who served us. He also commented that the importance of accessible outdoor recreation for the mental and therapeutic benefits cannot be understated.

Julie and Ryan offered MVAA's assistance and encouraged council members and the department to reach out and share information that promotes events or opportunities targeting veterans and/or their families.

Michael Harris thanked Ryan and the MVAA for the work they do to help support our veterans. He commented that his organization, [Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America](#), also encourages veterans to apply for their benefits, especially veteran's health care, before they have a catastrophic situation.

Sharon Schafer thanked the MVAA for their service. She also worked with the Michigan Veterans Trust Fund earlier in her career. Sharon commented that the work the MVAA does is very critical to veterans and their families, and thanked Ryan for the services they provide and for providing this information to the council. The council and the department will do everything they can as a group to provide further outreach.

Duncan Wyeth commented he also worked with the Jacobetti facility in Marquette and the VA hospital in Iron Mountain. He wanted to plug Sarah Peurakoski's programs in the Upper Peninsula through the Superior Alliance for Independent Living and the work they do to engage veterans and people with disabilities with the outdoors. He further explained that a disproportionate number of individuals that served in the armed forces reside or recreate in the Upper Peninsula versus the Lower Peninsula. Ryan echoed Duncan's sentiments. He has worked with Sarah in the past and still tries to stay connected with SAIL. In fact, they have a veterans AT ride coming up soon.

Robert Winn stated his organization, Disability Network Oakland/Macomb, also runs a veteran's program. He will reach out to Ryan to talk more about partnerships in support of their efforts.

Another program that was mentioned is [The Tuesday Toolmen](#), which is a group of volunteers that gather each week to build entry ramps, install other safety and accessibility devices, and make home modifications for seniors over 62, veterans or persons with disabilities. The materials and labor for this service are provided at no cost to qualified homeowners. There are a few locations around the state, including Lansing.

After sharing other resources with the MVAA, council members were encouraged to reach out to the MVAA to share events, opportunities, or discuss further partnerships by contacting Ryan at [Engler3@michigan.gov](mailto:Engler3@michigan.gov) and [CortrightJ1@michigan.gov](mailto:CortrightJ1@michigan.gov). For a list of all the programs and resources they offer, visit their [website](#).

Yolanda highlighted the council members that also offer programs to veterans and people with disabilities, as well as the DNR's accessible recreation webpage.

The council was very appreciative of the MVAA's sharing of information about the various resources that are available to Michigan's veterans and their families, and concurred that they too will continue to provide these resources and outreach.

## **EV CHARGING STATION TEMPLATE UPDATE**

Dave Haupt reported that Cindy Burkhour and Keith Cheli gave a presentation to the Council on Future Mobility and Electrification (CFME) in June 2021 regarding the standard template that was created and endorsed by this council for the installation of universally accessible EV charging stations. He stated that the chair and the CFME workgroup were very receptive to the

design template, but it will not be included in their report to the Governor at this time. This will be a policy decision that can be addressed after they receive feedback on their report.

Cindy Burkhour commented that it is proposed that this template be used for installation of all EV charging stations on state/DNR-owned lands and at all state/DNR-owned facilities, for starters, but it would be great if the State of Michigan would adopt this as the standard for all EV charging station installations throughout the state.

Will Purves asked if he could use this template. He has been approached by a couple of organizations regarding this issue. Cindy Burkhour offered to put together something under her subcommittee so that others can share the template. Scott Norris reminded council members to be clear that this is a proposed template at this time; it is not a state-approved plan. Dave Haupt will provide Will with the template and Cindy and Dave will put together a cover memo or something that explains the reasoning behind the proposed template for others to use or share.

Sharon further commented that, before anything is approved or posted anywhere, she would like to run the proposed template through their legal department. She will also check with the department's energy sprint team to make sure they have it on their radar and are looking at the design component.

Dave offered to get information to Sharon and Yolanda to start moving this template forward through the sprint team.

Michael Harris noted that, if the state is reluctant to adopt this template, there are many organizations that would be willing to write letters in support.

Matt Lincoln, DNR Parks and Recreation, also commented that state parks are looking at solar options for EV charging stations.

## **BREAK**

Chair Norris called for a break at 10:49 a.m. The council reconvened at 10:55 a.m.

## **DNR RECREATION GRANT APPLICATION**

Chair Norris explained that grant application/project TF21-0082, Mitchell State Park Day Use Renovation, in Cadillac, Michigan (Wexford County), is being presented to the council for endorsement. The project/application has already been thoroughly vetted through the two subcommittees and department staff. All council members also had the opportunity to review the project proposal and materials in advance of the meeting. Therefore, a brief overview of the project will be presented with very limited discussion, and each council member should be prepared to cast their vote to endorse this project/application.

Andrea Stay, chair of the department's Grant Application, Project, and Program Review subcommittee, explained that the grant application and proposed project has been vetted through an accessibility review and input process involving the grant applicants, respective division representatives, the department's internal subcommittee, and the AAC's Infrastructure and Natural Resources Program subcommittee. Information and materials were also shared with all council members for their review and input prior to this meeting.

Cindy Burkhour, chair of the AAC's Infrastructure and Natural Resources Program subcommittee, proceeded to give a brief overview of the grant application/project, noting that all comments received during the review process were addressed or incorporated into the final project plan as presented. She feels this is a strong application, especially since their intent is to make additional improvements following these renovations. After brief discussion, Cindy

gave her full support and recommendation that the council endorse this project as being fully and inclusively accessible, and recommends it move forward for funding through the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant program. The council voted on the application/project as follows:

**Mitchell State Park Day Use Renovation (TF21-0082)**

DNR Parks and Recreation Division

***Duncan Wyeth motioned in support of the council endorsing TF21-0082 – Mitchell State Park Day Use Renovation grant application/project as a fully and inclusively accessible project and recommending it for funding by the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board; Will Purves seconded the motion; the motion unanimously carried.***

The council wholeheartedly endorses TF21-0082 – Mitchell State Park Day Use Renovation project and highly recommends approval of this grant application by the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board at their December 2021 meeting.

The council had further discussion about the schematics and agreed that more detailed schematics or written descriptions would be better for future projects to show accurate information and all ADA improvements being proposed. The council also recommended that, once a good schematic or template is created, it could be used as an example for future applications.

**DNR RESERVATION SYSTEMS**

Cindy Burkhour commented about a situation she had with Tahquamenon Falls State Park when trying to reserve the track chair for her daughter. Obvious flaws with their reservations and a back-up system were highlighted. She asked that Sharon Schafer and/or Mike Holsinger have the track chair reservation system tested at all state facilities that offer track chairs to ensure the department has a good system in place and that the system itself is also accessible. Those that are responsible for handling track chair reservations must be available or have an alternate/back-up plan or system in place.

Sharon responded that, even though the state parks and staff were overwhelmed this season, it is no excuse. She also commented that the department is currently in the process of identifying a new vendor for the central reservation system. An on-line track chair reservation system could be considered as an enhancement or addition to the system. She will talk to the chief of the DNR Parks and Recreation Division to determine where they are in the vendor process and if they would consider adding track chair reservations to the system.

Cindy commented that, even if the department comes up with a system or process, there still needs to be on-the-ground implementation and staff availability to fill these reservations and assist visitors.

Sharon stated she will assign this task to the department's accessibility team and asked the team's chair, Dave Haupt, to assign this to a group of individuals that can come up with a standard policy or procedure for the reservation of track chairs, working with the state parks that offer track chairs. It may also be possible to place a reservation system on each state park's website until such time that this feature could be included in the state's central reservation system.

Dave responded that they have a similar situation with the reservation of accessible wildlife viewing/hunting blinds. There is no consistency on how to handle the use or reservation of

these blinds as well. Hopefully, the team can develop guidelines and procedures for state parks and state game areas on the acceptance, use and management of this adaptive equipment.

Stacy Welling Haughey also recommended identifying time slots or time limits that the chairs can be made available to allow staff time to recharge the batteries and do any other maintenance before reassigning them.

Rob Winn reminded the group that not everybody has access to the internet. Alternate methods of reserving these assistive devices also needs to be considered.

Michelle OKelly is the department's representative for Parks and Recreation. She volunteered to put a more standardized and consistent process in place as this program continues to grow.

Cindy commented there may also be a need for ongoing staff training for consistency and testing of a reservation system to ensure it is fully accessible and has a back-up system. She also recommended a follow-up with users or a way they can comment on their experiences.

Duncan Wyeth commented that trikes and e-bikes are also becoming a popular alternative and are being used as personal assistive mobility devices. This is a product that the department may also need to consider in their rules/regulations.

Tom Jones would also like to see an agreement put in place for those state parks or game areas that accept donations of track chairs or accessible hunting blinds, ensuring they are available to users year-round.

## **AAC INITIATIVES**

Sgt. Mike Mshar reported the department has created a workgroup to address changes to the hunter apprenticeship/mentoring program to expand hunting opportunities to people with cognitive or intellectual disabilities into adulthood. The workgroup is heading in a very positive direction, and he anticipates a good outcome. This issue is on the front burner to become an accommodating program for all to continue to enjoy hunting beyond the age of 18.

The department will provide updates as things progress.

## **DEPARTMENT UPDATES**

### **Executive Updates**

Sharon Schafer reported the assistant chief position for the DNR Forestry division is being assigned on a rotating basis. There are no other executive changes currently.

### **\$250 Million State Park Funding and \$150 Million Local Parks Funding**

Sharon also reported that the \$250 million additional dollars that the Governor announced for state park funding, as well as the \$150 million for local park funding, need to be appropriated by the Legislature. The department continues to have conversations with the Legislature. In the meantime, the department has pulled together a workgroup to figure out how to move these federal (American Rescue Plan) dollars through the system while identifying projects so they will be prepared and ready to move forward when further direction is received by the Legislature. The dollars must be obligated within three years and can only be applied to capital outlay improvements. Sharon identified universally accessible projects in her talks with the department's management team as priority projects for these dollars. She will provide updates as things progress through the department and the Legislature.



The department will also provide the council with an update on the pneumatic gun legislation at their December meeting.

### **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Updates**

Alexis Hermiz confirmed there is an internal workgroup addressing the apprenticeship and/or mentoring program.

The DEI team is in the middle of a systems thinking process, which is a process improvement model or action plan. They have focus groups that will map out impacts to our internal and external culture as a department, which overlaps with accessibility and disability awareness. This will be a six to eight month process.

The marketing events team is working on planning events. They are planning for Native American Heritage month, Hispanic Heritage and Disability Employment Awareness month. Statewide disability employee awareness month events are being planned by the statewide equity and inclusion officers' group. She will make sure information is provided to Yolanda to share with this council.

The department has also created a newly formed veterans engagement team, engaging department veterans, to address veteran employment and opportunities that overlap with the MVAA's efforts of outreach and engagement.

### **ADA Coordinator Updates**

Mike Holsinger reported he recently had a conversation on the use of golf carts in state parks, but no formal complaints have been received by the department.

### **A-Team Updates**

Dave Haupt reported that Cindy Krueger has accepted the co-chair position on the department's accessibility team. The marketing subcommittee is also working on providing quarterly emails to assist and educate department employees about accessibility, policies, resources, best practices, training materials, etc.

### **Track Chair Fundraising Campaign**

This subject was tabled as the representative had to depart the meeting early.

## **COUNCIL BUSINESS**

### **Legislative/Public Hearings**

Chair Norris reminded council members that, if they are speaking on an issue in front of the Legislature or are asked to attend a public hearing or event, members should only speak as a citizen or as a representative of their respective organizations. Council members should not speak as a representative of the department or the council as this is an advisory group to the department, not a regulatory unit.

Any requests to speak on behalf of the department will be formally requested by and through the department (i.e., panel discussion, etc.).

### **COUNCIL UPDATES**

Jessica Stark reported she has been working with Alan Campbell and local farmers. They will have accessible hunting trailers and a small early hunt in northern Michigan this season. She asked about all necessary requirements/paperwork that needs to be in place to participate in the early hunts. Dave Haupt will send information to her regarding any necessary requirements. Sharon also suggested she contact the Traverse City Customer Service Center for assistance.

Cindy Burkhour reported she has been invited to speak at the Governor's Conference on Tourism in November. If accepted, she will share information about this council and the department's accessible recreation opportunities. She also reported she is now a member of the department's Trails Advisory Council. She will work with this group to do universal accessibility reviews of state trail projects that are under development.

Yolanda announced Kim Woolridge was appointed as the Chief Deputy Director with the Michigan Department of Civil Rights. She will continue as a council member as long as she can. She then introduced Tyra Khan, who has been appointed as the interim State ADA Coordinator. Tyra introduced herself and expressed her excitement in joining future meetings and engaging with the council.

Duncan Wyeth commented about e-bikes becoming a popular alternative to trail riding that could become an accessibility issue and asked the department to address how they plan to handle e-bikes on non-motorized trails or in state parks. Cindy Burkhour commented there have been discussions to limit these bikes to pedestrian speeds, but she will take this request back to the trail's council.

Neal McKenzie asked about the restriction to applying for an elk hunting license and if those restrictions could be removed for people over 70 years of age. Sgt. Mshar confirmed that if a person successfully draws a permit, they are restricted to reapplying for ten years. He further explained that this is a very restrictive tag. The drawings are designed to provide others around the state with the opportunity to obtain a tag. A minimum of 40,000 apply each year, which is now reaching the 60,000 mark. Sharon suggested Neal attend a Natural Resources Commission meeting or submit a comment to them regarding his recommendation to consider opening up these licenses to the elderly. Yolanda will provide Neal with information on how to make public comment at a future NRC meeting.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

None.

#### **CLOSING BUSINESS**

Chair Norris announced the next meeting of the council is scheduled for Tuesday, December 7, 2021. It will be a virtual meeting. Information will be posted on the council's webpage.

#### **ADJOURN**

Chair Norris asked if there were any further comments. No additional comments were offered. He then asked for a motion to adjourn.

***Cindy Burkhour motioned for adjournment; Duncan Wyeth seconded the motion.***

The meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m.