



ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

MINUTES

December 7, 2021

VIRTUAL MEETING

ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COUNCIL (AAC)

PRESENT

Scott Norris, Chair
Tom Jones, Co-Chair
Ken Buchholtz
Cindy Burkhour
Michael Harris
Justin Lippe
Neal McKenzie
Will Purves
Jessica Stark
Billy Vickers
Bryan Wilkinson
Robert Winn
Duncan Wyeth

ABSENT

Vendela Collins
Kim Woolridge

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
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 and Kristin Wildman, Wildlife
Tracy Claramunt, Fisheries

INTERPRETERS

Janet Jurus and Stacy Dildy
Leticia Fox, Closed Captioner

PRESENTERS:

Craig Brunet, DNR Legislative Liaison
Keith Cheli, DNR Parks and Recreation

GUESTS:

Rebecca Powell, Michigan Department of Civil Rights
Jenny Cook, Michigan Equine Trails/DNR SW Michigan Equine Trails Subcommittee Representative

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.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chair Norris asked the council if they had any additions, corrections, or discussion regarding the August 24, 2021, Minutes. No additional corrections, edits or discussion was offered.

Chair Norris requested a motion to approve the August 24, 2021, Minutes.

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

MOMENT OF SILENCE FOR SARAH PEURAKOSKI

Chair Norris announced the recent and unexpected passing of council member, Sarah Peurakoski, Executive Director of the Superior Alliance of Independent Living/Disability Network of the Upper Peninsula (UP). Duncan Wyeth, another council member from the UP, also expressed his sentiments for Sarah's untimely passing and offered his assistance to find a new member from SAIL or the UP. The entire UP community has had a devastating blow. The council and the UP community will miss Sarah and her dedication to serving people with disabilities.

Chair Norris asked for a moment of silence from the council in remembrance of Sarah.

The council sends their condolences to Sarah's family, friends, and UP SAIL.

Ken Buchholtz commented that he is working with Stacy Haughey to send a condolence letter to UP SAIL and Sarah's family.

GOVERNOR'S TOURISM CONFERENCE

Robert Winn was chosen to attend the 2021 Pure Michigan Governor's Conference on Tourism at the Motor City Casino in Detroit on November 3, 2021. Robert sat on a panel and reported they had 31 participants in their break-out session on Universal Design. He said the session went very well. They also had a participant that was a former member of the council, but he could not remember his name. They had a total of 17 break-out sessions and a lot of displays.

Cindy Burkhour was also nominated to be a panelist, but they were only looking for two this year. Hopefully Cindy will be considered for the 2022 conference.

EV CHARGING STATION PILOT

Keith Cheli, DNR Parks and Recreation, reminded the council that they have been working on a universally accessible EV charging station template for a few years now. He also reminded the council that this all began when a local electric cooperative approached the Parks and Recreation Division with their interest in designing, implementing, and providing a no-cost pilot program to install EV charging stations at three state park locations along US-23. One of the first things identified was the need to incorporate universal design into the charging stations.

The cooperative was very interested and engaged in this universal design concept. After vetting the design through the AAC's Subcommittee on Infrastructure, chaired by Cindy Burkhour, and engaging with different organizations and the A-Team, they came up with the only universally accessible EV charging station template, which was endorsed by this council in 2018. Keith further explained that, although guidelines for EV charging stations and parking spaces exist, there are no standards or templates available for a universally designed EV charging station.

The park pilot initiative began in 2016 and worked its way up to finalized plans and getting ready to send this project out to bid, and then Covid hit. This put a brief hold on their initiative for nearly a year and a half. When the utility company was in a position to start advertising bids for construction and installation, they had a hard time finding companies willing to construct the three stations within the price limits identified, mostly due to the rise in the cost of construction. They did receive one offer, but it came in X higher than the advertised cost. The cooperative ultimately withdrew their proposal due to costs exceeding their budget. They are in the process of working with the CEO of the cooperative to seek an audience and possibly readvertise this project this coming season in hopes that things will settle down with the supply chain, construction, and other costs.

Keith further explained that, despite this pilot initiative being put on hold, it allowed them to focus their initiatives on this universally accessible design template as the bigger story. Initially, this template was created to be the standard for any charging stations that may be installed on state-owned lands, statewide. The Parks and Recreation Division has since adopted this template as their standard design for any EV charging stations that may be installed at any state parks or on other lands that are administered by the Parks and Recreation Division. In seeking out partnerships, this template is being utilized in those conversations.

On a higher note, Cindy Burkhour and Keith had the opportunity to present this design template to the Governor's Council on Future Mobility and Electrification (CFME). The chair of the CFME was very impressed with this design concept and conversations with this group continue. The CFME just recently submitted their report to the Governor. Once the CFME's report has been reviewed and approved by the Governor's Office, the CFME will then move forward with implementation, at which point they will be ready to revisit this design to incorporate into their policies. Members of the CFME have also indicated their interest in engaging with this council at a future meeting to update them on their efforts and further discuss this design template.

Keith has also received a lot of out-of-state contact from organizations that are very interested in this design template and how they plan to implement it. So, bottom line, people are aware of this template, and what the council and the department is doing, and are looking to duplicate our efforts.

The council expressed their disappointment with the pilot project being put on hold, and further discussed other organizations, designers, and companies that are moving forward at a rapid pace, installing charging stations that do not meet ADA standards or universal design.

Cindy Burkhour also commented that, when money starts flowing into Michigan, it would be ideal to get this template on the radar as a requirement before these dollars are disbursed.

Duncan Wyeth also expressed his interest in getting more charging stations installed in the northwestern UP and asked that the department consider installing one of these universally accessible charging stations at the Eagle Harbor Marina, especially since they are in the process of upgrading this marina, as well as other department locations that are in the process of being renovated. Keith responded that the division is considering this design and installation in conjunction with all facility upgrades and renovations. He has also participated in stakeholder meetings where they are interested in establishing a grid of charging stations across the UP, working with utility companies that are located and provide service to citizens across the UP.

Ken Buchholtz also reported that Tesla installed EV charging stations at the Meijer in Escanaba this summer.

Keith also commented that accessibility seems to be an oversight, even with a lot of state and federal regulation components. We have a long way to go on standards, accountability, enforceability, education, raising awareness, and getting companies and organizations up to speed on universal design and ADA standards. Some companies should also be held responsible for ensuring universal design when they create partnerships with other companies or organizations (i.e. contractors).

Yolanda also read a statement from the chair of the CFME to this group that explains, the Legislature provides funding for the EV charging recommendations in the CFME 2021 report. Configuration on charging stations on public lands will be determined much later in the process. There will be plenty of time for DNR proposals to be considered in the final deployment plan so, basically, nothing will happen between now and February of 2022. His intent is to engage with this group as soon as their report has been approved by the Governor's Office.

Tom Jones and Cindy Burkhour both agreed that the opportunity is now to ensure that all charging stations being installed, especially for those companies that are receiving grants to install charging stations, be required to install an accessible, universally accessibly designed station versus the need to replace stations down the road.

The Chair thanked Keith for the update and discussion.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Chair Norris introduced the department's Legislative Liaison, Craig Brunet. Craig thanked the council for the opportunity to provide them with updates on the pneumatic gun legislation and the mentored hunting program.

Pneumatic Gun Legislation

Craig explained that most refer to this device as a pneumatic bow, but the department considers it a pneumatic gun as it basically operates like a gun. The department and the administration are opposed to this legislation. The reason they are opposed is the department looks at the device as a firearm, not archery equipment. Law Enforcement had the opportunity to demo this piece of equipment. It is very powerful and operates more like a gun than a piece of archery equipment. The legislation, as currently written, is proposing that this equipment be used during the archery season, which raises serious safety concerns.

The department has offered the sponsor of the bill to adjust the language to refer to it as a pneumatic gun to be used during firearm season. It's not so much the equipment that the department is opposed to; it's more the terminology and use of the equipment. If changes were made to the terminology and authorized use of this equipment, the department would be in a much better position to support the use of a pneumatic gun during any firearm hunting season.

Ken Buchholtz agrees that this equipment would be perfect for firearm season as crossbows can be very dangerous, especially to those that are blind or have mobility issues. He supports the department's position on the legislation as currently written.

Tom Jones asked if this equipment would also be allowed during the Independence and Liberty hunts. Craig responded that this equipment would be allowed during any season that allows firearms.

Mentored Hunting Program Revisions

Craig reported there is a department workgroup that was established to address revisions to the mentored hunting program. They had hoped to introduce these revisions to the Legislature in the fall, but they are now working with other sponsors regarding additional changes to hunting programs and may choose to bundle them together. They hope to have revisions to the mentored hunting program introduced to the Legislature in January.

The proposal is still in draft form, but the intent is to try and create more access to individuals that have difficulties obtaining their hunter certification, including people with cognitive or intellectual disabilities, to align with a long-term mentored hunting program. The bill would provide guidance on who would qualify for a long-term mentored hunting program, including those hunters that age out of the apprentice or currently established mentored hunting programs.

Ken Buchholtz commented there are many individuals in his group that have a hard time passing a hunter safety course or receiving their hunter safety certificate. A long-term mentored hunting program would be an excellent revision.

Craig responded that is exactly what they are trying to achieve with these revisions to the program. The same issue was brought up by a Conservation Officer, who is also a member of the department's accessibility team. He has an adult son that can no longer hunt with him because he cannot pass the exam and no longer qualifies for the apprentice or mentored youth programs. Their goal is to expand the program to those individuals that age out of the programs and may need continued assistance. This long-term mentored hunting program would allow them the opportunity to experience hunting, or continue to hunt, with their family members, friends, groups, or another licensed hunter.

The council offered to provide letters in support of their bill once it is introduced. Yolanda will follow up with the Legislative Liaison's office and notify the council once the bill has been introduced so they can track its progress.

AAC INITIATIVES

All Sportsman's Card

Tom Jones reported a group of council members and department staff who are involved in the council's Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Deer Regulations have been discussing a proposed, voluntary, Adaptive Sportsman's Card program for about a year. The idea is to have all qualifying information in one location versus being required to carry around all the paperwork/permits that shows law enforcement that a person is qualified to hunt from a standing vehicle, hunt with a laser sighting device, is eligible for the Liberty or Independence hunts, and so on. Currently, hunters with disabilities are required to obtain all these qualifying certifications or permits from the Department of Military Affairs, the Secretary of State, a physician, or the department. Once they have obtained the appropriate documents, they are sent to the department and logged into a person's hunting license profile. This card would allow for all qualifying information to be housed in one location. It would also alleviate conflicts, problems, or communication barriers between Law Enforcement and the hunters.

The group is trying to introduce a way to encourage more people with disabilities to get back into the outdoors, while tying in all the demographics and numbers that could be useful to the department. This would be on a voluntary basis only. Hunters with disabilities will not be required to obtain an Adaptive Sportsman's Card. This program/proposal could also apply to any requirements or documentation that is required for other department programs, such as fishing, birding, etc.

Tom further reported that this group has another meeting with the department's License Control unit to further discuss the feasibility of introducing and implementing such a card/program.

Other proposals that are on the table include offering a discount to those that participate in this Adaptive Sportsman's Card program as a way to encourage more participation and to possibly increase license sales to an underrepresented group of outdoorsmen/women, in addition to considering a discount to veterans that return to Michigan to hunt or fish that were previously residents of or were stationed in this state. However, any requests for discounts or a change in the fee structure requires constitutional amendments through the Legislature, so these two proposals still need to be vetted through the subcommittee and the department.

Ken Buchholtz commented this is a great idea. For someone who needs a permit to hunt from a standing vehicle, is 100% disabled, blind or deaf, or qualifies for the Liberty or Independence hunts, it would be so much easier and more beneficial to have this information housed in one location.

Chair Norris also commented that this will be extremely beneficial to Law Enforcement. It would alleviate their having to be in an uncomfortable position to verify someone's eligibility.

Tom further commented that, down the road, this card could also include those that qualify for the long-term mentored hunting program that the department is currently working on, and could possibly be loaded onto someone's iPhone.

DEPARTMENT UPDATES

Executive Updates

Sharon Schafer reported that the department established a new Office of Public Lands. Scott Whitcomb will manage this office to oversee all public lands and land transactions across the department in compliance with its [2021-2027 Public Land Strategy](#), which should soon be adopted by the Legislature. Scott led the efforts for the Public Land Strategy and is also overseeing the State Land Review. The department currently has 240,000 acres of surplus land that is being reviewed, ten counties at a time, to determine if these lands should be retained, offered at public auction, exchanged, disposed of/sold, or offered to another conservation-related organization. Scott is also involved with the department's renewable energy initiatives, carbon sequestration, is a member of the Energy Sprint Team, and has also been involved in some of the discussions about the accessible EV charging station template. Sharon suggested inviting Scott to a future meeting to provide an update to the council regarding his new office and their role.

Craig Brunet, who just made a presentation to the council, has also accepted a new position as a State Assistant Administrator. He will be working on various projects to assist the department's Chief Administrative Officer with many department initiatives. Craig will continue his role as Legislative Liaison until a replacement has been hired.

The Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) Board, at their December meeting, awarded \$45 million in grants to local communities and the department for various recreational acquisition and development projects. This was one of the largest disbursement of funds from the MNRTF, with 22 acquisition grant recommendations totaling \$22.3 million and 95 development grant recommendations totaling \$23.2 million.

The department also awarded \$8 million in Land and Water Conservation Fund grants, and \$2 million in Recreation Passport grants for outdoor recreation projects.

Andrea Stay, with the Grants Management Section, also reported that the department project that came before the council's subcommittee for an accessibility review, the Mitchell State Park Day Use Renovation project, was one of the grants that was approved. As a reminder, this project was vetted through the department and council subcommittees and endorsed by the council at their August 2021 meeting. This project will include accessible pathways, playground, restrooms, and mobi-mats to access the beach area. She also mentioned other accessibility projects that were approved by the Board, to include:

- Genesee County Miracle League baseball field with prefabricated dugouts and features that will be accessible to all users, including children and families with disabilities.
- Midland County Tittabawassee River Project where they will be including green space and accessible pathways, fishing, and viewing areas.
- Antrim County Grass River Natural Area where they will be constructing an accessible boardwalk, observation platforms, and kayak launches.
- City of Ypsilanti Frog Island Park where they will improve access to the Huron River water trail and Border-to-Border trail.
- Douglas Houghton Falls in the Keweenaw Peninsula (UP) where they will be developing unisex, accessible vault toilets, overlooks, and pathways.

Yolanda will send the council information about the grants that were awarded through the MNRTF, Land and Water, and Recreation Passport grant programs.

Sharon further reported that the \$250 million state park infrastructure and \$150 million local park development dollars that were announced by the Governor are still pending in the Legislature. In the meantime, the department continues to identify state park infrastructure projects and processes to disburse these dollars once they are approved by the Legislature. This will be a lot of dollars that need to be moved through the system. All dollars/projects must be committed by 2026.

Sharon also announced that this will be her last meeting as she is retiring on January 14, 2022. A new chief (her replacement) will be announced soon. She anticipates her replacement will take her role as the council's sponsor, and she will take time to brief them on the role and process of the council. She thanked the council for their commitment over the years. Michigan is leading in accessibility. As Yolanda has mentioned, we are being contacted by other states that are interested in the council and our programs, which is a compliment to the efforts of this council and the department's accessibility team. Carry on and keep doing the great work to include everyone in the outdoors, keep pushing, and keep pushing the department. There is a lot more than needs to be done.

Duncan Wyeth asked for contact information for the Office of Public Lands. He would like to talk to them about a large acquisition proposal in the Keweenaw Peninsula. Sharon responded that the department, including Scott Whitcomb and Stacy Haughey, are aware of this large land transaction proposal and have been involved in the review process, as well as numerous meetings with many stakeholders and partners.

Michael Harris asked if the department follows up with grantees to ensure they are complying with ADA requirements as proposed in their projects. Andrea explained that they are required to submit progress reports, and recreation plans every five years, to receive reimbursement. However, staff cannot inspect every site around the state, so they rely on members of the public or communities to notify them if they feel the project is not adhering to ADA requirements or specs.

The council continued discussions about reporting projects that are not ADA compliant or are not adhering to the terms of their grant agreement. It was suggested that all council members work with their local communities and report any of these findings to the Grants Management Section.

Sharon further commented that there are only four grant coordinators that cover the entire state, averaging 102 grant applications each year. If this council could work with their local communities and partners to report non-compliant projects, it would really help the grant coordinators as they cannot possibly inspect every single site/project.

Yolanda will provide the council with a list of all grant coordinators by region.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Updates

Alexis Hermiz reported they are wrapping up for the end of the year. A Veterans Engagement Team was developed late Spring/early Summer. The DEI team is looking to elevate this program to include more veterans, external resources, and promote the program publicly for veteran engagement. They will probably have a couple of presentations for this council next year.

The DEI team is also working on a lot of process improvement and systems thinking projects, which is driven by employee engagement. They wrapped up Disability Awareness Month with some presentations that were coordinated on a statewide level, to include disability awareness training that should be coming out to state employees within the next month. They also wrapped up Native American Heritage month in November with a few presentations from Native American residents/authors. There will be a lot of updates in the new year and in the coming months, with the team focusing on more department initiatives to include statewide equity and inclusion events or trainings.

Yolanda reminded Alexis that members of this council were interested in participating in some of these training sessions. Alexis responded that certain events could be pushed out to this group to sign up as contractors. She would also be willing to provide the Explicit Bias training to this group if desired. There will be more opportunities in the new year for this group to get involved in some of the department's or the state's trainings or events. She will make sure this group receives invitations to register/participate.

Duncan Wyeth commented that he is disappointed that the department's announcements about recruitments, especially recruitments for conservation offices, does not consider or include people with disabilities or veterans. Alexis responded that she would take these comments back to Law Enforcement for consideration and to increase diversity. She also commented that the department has the highest level of recognition as being a veteran-friendly employer. They continue to work with the DMVA and will have this conversation with Law Enforcement. Duncan further commented that Michael Harris, Tom Jones, and others could assist with the Veterans Engagement program and outreach, and could also identify candidates that would be outstanding officers.

ADA Coordinator Updates

Mike Holsinger reported that the department has not received any official Title II complaints this year. They have mostly been concerns submitted via email or phone calls, which are then assigned to the appropriate division to address them and respond. All concerns received have been addressed in a timely manner and to the requestor's satisfaction.

A-Team Updates

Dave Haupt reported that the team started sending out notifications and information to department employees to brand the A-Team and provide information related to accessibility, such as how to create accessible documents, tips and tricks, your division representative, who we are, what we do, our role, and how we can assist.

Cindy Krueger reported they are also working on messaging that will go to WCMU radio to provide announcements and reminders to a wide audience about accessible outdoor recreation opportunities and events. These messages should start coming out in 2022.

Track Chair Fundraising Campaign

Michelle OKelly reported that, to date, they have raised \$87,782 for the track chair fundraising campaign. This puts them at 11 chairs that will now be funded. Holland State Park will be receiving two chairs, the Bald Mountain Recreation Area chair will be delivered soon, and the Friends of Ludington State Park recently donated a chair to the park.

Michelle also mentioned that a 16-year-old student, Ben Miller, from the Pewamo-Westphalia high school, did a fundraising campaign. He used the track chair at Muskegon State Park and that inspired him to raise funds to bring a track chair to a location closer to home. He started with a pickles and popcorn fundraising event, which raised nearly \$1,000. Word got out to the community and donations started rolling in. Ben raised \$14,500 for a new track chair that will be available at the Ionia Recreation Area in the spring.

Michelle also reported that Michigan is #2 in the nation for accessible recreation and for having a track chair program. Sixteen states have a track chair program. She has been receiving a lot of calls from other states who are interested in starting a track chair program. She just talked to the states of Washington and Montana last week, and she is pulling together a forum to link other states to talk about and compare their fundraising efforts, track chair and reservation programs, and challenges.

Track Chair Reservation Procedures

Michelle reported that she has talked to some of the parks that have a track chair, as well as those parks that are interested in receiving a track chair. There are many challenges to accepting, maintaining, and reserving track chairs. She also met with Billy Vickers, Bryan Wilkinson, and Yolanda Taylor to discuss options and talked about a track chair host or ambassador program (similar to the campground host program) to solicit volunteers that would help with reservations and be responsible for making sure the chairs are charged up and available. They are still working on the process/procedure but the idea of adding track chair reservations to the Central Reservation System is still being considered.

Cindy Burkhour suggested including national parks, especially Sleeping Bear Dunes National Park, in discussions about our track chair programs. Michelle has been in contact with Sleeping Bear Dunes.

Duncan Wyeth commented that it would be great if the department could get an article in some magazines or national publications, especially those that focus on accessible recreation and adaptive equipment, to highlight Michigan's accessible recreation opportunities and the adaptive equipment that is available at Michigan's state parks and game areas. He also commented that it would be great if some of these federal dollars that are coming to the state could be earmarked for accessibility and adaptive equipment.

Sharon responded that the department is still trying to determine if there are any restrictions tied to those federal dollars, but she will share the council's request with the department to consider

earmarking dollars towards accessibility. However, accessibility is at the forefront of all department projects currently being identified.

COUNCIL BUSINESS

Vacancies/Process

Chair Norris announced there are still some vacancies on the council. Earlier in the meeting, Duncan talked about a possible candidate in the UP to fill Sarah Peurakoski's vacancy. The council has also talked about including a member of the tribal community to sit on the council. He asked that council members from the UP send in their recommendations for a possible candidate(s) from the UP. He also asked other council members to submit possible candidates that would be an asset to the council. All recommendations should be sent to Yolanda so she can send them an application for consideration. There are currently four vacancies that exist.

Yolanda also explained there is a process that needs to be followed. Recently, an application was sent directly to the Director. Applications should first be submitted to the sponsor or Yolanda. The applicants will go through a background check before the council Chair, Co-Chair, and the sponsor review the applicants and make their selections. They are then sent to the Director for his consideration and approval.

Adoption of 2022 Meeting Dates

Chair Norris called for a motion to adopt the 2022 meeting dates of the Accessibility Advisory Council:

Duncan Wyeth motioned to approve the 2022 meeting dates of the council as February 22, May 24, August 23, and December 6, 2022; Tom Jones seconded the motion; the motion unanimously carried, and the 2022 meeting dates of the council were adopted.

Chair Norris announced it is unknown at this time if any of the meetings will be held in-person. Virtual meetings are currently planned but if there is an opportunity to meet in-person, a hybrid meeting will occur to allow in-person and virtual participation.

COUNCIL UPDATES

Adaptive Hunting Clinic/PATH Pilot Program

Jessica Stark reported she has been working with the PATH Foundation ([Passing Along the Heritage](#)) to get people with disabilities out hunting. They partnered with Big Buck Ranch near Clare. It gives people a once in a lifetime opportunity to go hunting, with the use of adaptive equipment, and stay at the camp one to two nights. It also gives them the opportunity to mingle and build camaraderie with others who have the same interests. Jessica's organization, the Lighthouse Neurological Rehab Center, continues to work with the PATH Foundation to find more lands and provide more hunting opportunities in northwest Michigan. They were able to use the PATH Foundation's adaptive hunting trailer with the sip/puff equipment. They also set up a day during the Liberty Hunt to get people out hunting on a farmer's land. They hope to build this program into the future to open more lands and more opportunities to hunters with disabilities.

Jessica also brought up the difficulties she had with registering two patients for the Hunt from a Standing Vehicle permit. Both residents live in assisted living facilities and their state identifications had expired. She eventually was able to get their state IDs renewed but, if this council and the department is looking to expand programs to others with disabilities, they could run into more issues. The system requires them to show proof of residency and a lot of these

people live in nursing homes or assisted living facilities. She will address this at the ad hoc subcommittee meeting.

She also reported that she held an adaptive hunting clinic at Central Michigan University for their recreational therapy students. Billy Vickers and Bryan Wilkinson brought adaptive equipment and also participated in the clinic.

Cindy Burkhour commented about the zip line at Muskegon State Park. The zip line is complete and is fully accessible. This is their first season. The concern is if the harness provides enough trunk control, but that would have to be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Neal McKenzie asked Jessica how they can get information about their hunting programs in northwest Michigan out to deaf hunters, and others. Jessica responded that between now and the next hunting season, they will work on an application process. She will share that information with all council members, and people can get information/updates from the PATH Foundation's website.

Dave Haupt reported that the zip line also has a vehicle that transports people to the top of the zip line for those in a wheelchair or are unable to climb the hill to the top of the ride. Dave also reported that Wardens TV followed along with the PATH Foundation on a recent bear hunt with a blind person. They also joined the group for dinner and interviewed a few of the participants. That episode should be coming out in the new season in January. People can watch Wardens TV through the Outdoor Channel.

Ken Buchholtz reported he had a good season and participated in the Liberty and Independence hunts, harvesting around 15 deer this season. They also had a good spring turkey hunt harvesting some nice sized toms. He will be closing for the season. Ken is also on the Board of Directors for the National Wild Turkey Federation. He will be attending their annual banquet in January. They will also be holding a banquet for the Escanaba Chapter in February. Ken has also been involved with the Delta County Inclusive Community Coalition building bridges for people with disabilities. He has been working with a gentleman that is blind and is trying to find him a job, but they recently hired another gentleman at a local meat market where Ken is teaching him how to process deer.

Tom Jones just wrapped up firearm season. The Liberty and Independence hunts had a few successful hunters. This year they hosted another hunt at a Washtenaw County parks nature preserve. The county was going to hire sharp shooters to control and cull the deer population. Instead, Tom hosted the hunt as a free service, where they harvested 25 deer. Tom also reported that Island Lake now has 2-3 trackchairs. Tom has been working with the park manager and will also be placing 2-3 accessible hunting blinds at Island Lake to pair with the trackchairs. They will be having a placement/dedication ceremony in early Spring to highlight the adaptive equipment and accessible recreation opportunities at Island Lake. MiOFO will also be taking reservations for the early hunts at Island Lake.

Cindy Burkhour asked if the mParks Access to Recreation Foundation has issued any grants. Justin Lippe responded that no grants have been issued recently. Cindy also reported that she is the technical consultant with the Toyota Mobility grant program through the National Environmental Education Foundation. A Michigan project was funded for the Metroparks this year where they will be putting in accessible beach wheelchairs at five Metroparks next summer. There may be more funding, but it depends on sales of Toyota's Woodland van that just launched this fall. They are committing \$250 for every Toyota Woodland van that is sold worldwide to the Toyota Mobility grant program at least through 2022, but they may consider continuing this program into future years. The grants are small, ranging from \$20 to \$25

thousand dollars, but it is another grant opportunity to purchase or install adaptive equipment. Council members asked for information about this program. Cindy will send out the information to the council about this grant program and where to apply.

Duncan Wyeth reported there were several nice television stories in the UP about outdoor women's programs/workshops. The Michigan Disability Rights Coalition does a program called Her Story that focuses on women with disabilities. Duncan was wondering if the department has ever considered putting together an outdoor women's workshop or event focusing on women with a variety of disabilities. The female gender is underrepresented in general in outdoor recreation and sports. Dave Haupt responded that he and Yolanda can talk to the coordinator of the department's Becoming an Outdoor Woman program to consider hosting workshops or events for women with disabilities and, if they do, Wardens TV could film one of the events.

Duncan also reported that he has been communicating with department staff on the Eagle Harbor marina upgrade project. His hope is that the department would consider installing accessible kayak launches at all marinas but, for some locations, including Eagle Harbor, there is a safety concern with motorized and human powered canoes/kayaks. He further commented that the department, when they are investing money to upgrade marinas, should also consider including accessible kayak launches and other non-motorized watercraft as a part of their master plan. There are creative ways to separate launch sites from marina traffic. There are several locations around the harbor where they could install accessible kayak launches.

Cindy Burkhour also commented that she works on site planning in the UP and would be willing to work with Duncan on the harbor planning initiative in his area.

Sharon Schafer commented that boater registration fees fund improvements at marinas, boat launches, and harbors. The problem is kayaks, canoes, and other small non-motorized watercraft typically are not required to register or pay registration fees for their vessels and do not contribute to this funding. However, she encourages them to continue to work with the locals, especially if they are going to operate these locations.

Bryan Wilkinson submitted a written update that he is working with an 85-year-old veteran who drew a cow elk tag to provide him with an Action Trackchair for the December 11-19 elk hunt. His son is very excited for his dad and is very grateful that Bryan is arranging for the use of a trackchair for his father.

Chair Norris thanked all the council members for the continued work they do to provide services and opportunities to the disability community, often on a voluntary basis.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jenny Cook, Michigan Equine Trails and DNR SW Michigan Equine Trails Subcommittee representative, provided information/stats to the council prior to the meeting, and presented information on the benefits that horses and horseback riding provide to all people and communities. Michigan is the 12th largest state in horse population, with over 189,00 horses. They have amazing education and career pathways where horses help supply over 30,000 jobs. Equestrian trails are maintained by over 50 friends' groups, donating over \$500,000 in volunteer services and donations each year. The horse industry also contributes over \$2.6 billion to Michigan's economy through barns, equipment, feed, trailers, trucks, professional services, etc. Horse therapy provides emotional, mental, physical, and substance abuse therapy, with over 50 horse therapy organizations throughout Michigan. She encourages council members to share information about the importance and therapeutic benefits of horses and horse therapy and to

consider them as an option for people with disabilities to enjoy the outdoors. Jenny can be reached at mi.trail.rep@gmail.com or 269-998-5916.

CLOSING BUSINESS

Chair Norris announced the next meeting of the council is scheduled for February 22, 2022. It will be a virtual meeting. Information and updates will be posted to the council's [webpage](#).

Chair Norris once again congratulated Sharon Schafer on her retirement. He then asked for a motion to formally thank Sharon for sponsoring the council and giving them the support, guidance, and leadership over the years.

Cindy Burkhour motioned to formally thank Sharon Schafer for her leadership, support, guidance, and sponsorship over the years; Michael Harris seconded the motion; the motion unanimously carried, and the council formally thanked Sharon Schafer and wished her a wonderful retirement.

Sharon commented that she is going to miss this group but thanked them for all their efforts and advice over the years. This group has made a huge difference in contributing to the landscape and providing accessible and enjoyable recreation for all in this Great State.

ADJOURN

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

Ken Buchholtz motioned for adjournment; Duncan Wyeth seconded the motion.

The Chair wished everyone a wonderful holiday season.

The meeting adjourned at 11:40 a.m.