



## ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

### MINUTES

December 8, 2020

### VIRTUAL MEETING

#### ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COUNCIL (AAC)

##### **PRESENT**

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

##### **ABSENT**

Vendela Collins  
Justin Lippe

#### **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)**

Tamara Jorkasky, Executive  
Rachel Coale, Forestry  
Andrea Stay, Grants Management  
David Haupt, *A-Team Co-Chair*, Marketing and Outreach  
Diana Paiz, Michigan History Center  
Angie Herrera, *A-Team Chair*, Minerals  
Ryan Soulard and Kristin Wildman, Wildlife

#### **INTERPRETERS**

Janna Rowan and Stacy Pierce  
Leticia Fox, Closed Captioner

#### **PRESENTERS:**

Keith Cheli, Regional Field Planner, DNR Parks and Recreation  
Doug Rich, Western Upper Peninsula District Supervisor, DNR Parks and Recreation  
Jennifer Hirst, Rehabilitation Consultant, Labor and Economic Opportunity

## REGULAR MEETING

### INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Norris called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and announced that this is the second 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 that everybody be patient 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 11, 2020 Minutes. No additional corrections, edits or discussion was offered.

Chair Norris requested a motion to approve the August 11, 2020 Minutes.

***Duncan Wyeth motioned to approve the Minutes; Neal McKenzie seconded the motion; the motion unanimously carried, and the August 2020 Minutes were approved.***

Wyeth thanked Yolanda for the comprehensive and informative Minutes.

Chair Norris also took a minute to congratulate Tom Jones on his award from the Huron Waterloo Pathways Initiative. Tom and his organization, Michigan Operation Freedom Outdoors (MiOFO), received the Legacy Builder Community Award for facilitating installation of barrier free hunting blinds in the Pinckney Recreation Area along the Border-to-Border trail, stating:

*“Your work has expanded access to hunting, wildlife watching, nature and the B2B (Border-to-Border) Trail. Inclusivity and providing access for all community members is central to the purpose of the Trail. Thank you for helping us expand a wide range of recreational opportunities that can be accessed directly from the B2B.”*

Tom thanked the Chair and gave a brief overview of the award. MiOFO’s award will be acknowledged virtually this year as they are unable to host their in-person donor appreciation event. The physical award will be mailed to his office.

### RECREATIONAL SAFETY COURSES UPDATE

Alexis Hermiz, the department’s DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) officer, gave the council an update on her conversations with the Law Enforcement Division (LED) regarding their Rec Safety on-line courses, the department’s Implicit Bias Training, and DEI efforts.

The on-line Rec Safety courses are administered by Kalkomey (vendor), which includes the hunter safety platform. The accessibility issues that were raised by the council (i.e., screen reader capability and completion of on-line courses by people with cognitive disabilities) were presented to Kalkomey. They completed an accessibility review of their on-line platform, and e-Michigan also completed their second accessibility assessment review of this system. The new on-line training platform was originally scheduled to go live in August but, due to the pandemic, LED announced the system will go live at a future date to be announced. The LED will continue to work with Kalkomey to fix functionalities that were identified as not being accessible before it goes live.

As one of the requirements of the hunter safety course, field days that were initially scheduled to take place from mid-March to mid-August 2020 were cancelled. The department is still

navigating the pandemic and what the field days will look like in 2021. Erica Moore, with LED, is on point to communicate when these field days will resume.

Alexis opened the floor to any additional questions or comments regarding the Rec Safety platform.

Tom Jones asked about the hunter safety courses, and if there would be an opportunity to offer field days in the Spring of 2021. Tom also suggested that maybe the department would consider a waiver system for 2021, and possibly create a three-year apprenticeship program before requiring someone to take the hunter safety course and the field test. Having a waiver in place would help eliminate conversations at the last minute for the 2021 hunting season. Also, there was talk about making the hunter safety course available in an alternate format for those with cognitive or non-verbal disabilities.

Currently, Alexis is not sure if the field days will be offered in 2021 or what the status is with the on-line platforms; she would prefer to follow up with the LED. Alexis recommended that the council's ad hoc subcommittee could meet with the LED to discuss the Rec Safety courses and field days, and bridge that gap in communication with Kalkomey. She will take the lead in following up with LED and possibly getting a meeting scheduled.

Alexis also reported that the department had a statewide implicit bias training for all employees in September-October of this year, with a 99% completion rate. Implicit bias training was just one in a series of additional training that will be offered. By April 1, 2021, the department should have training curriculum set to include implicit bias training, culture competency, and disability awareness.

On a larger scale, the department has a DEI Team that includes 25 individuals, representing various divisions and regions of the department at varying levels. They have created recommendations to be implemented within the department and will be working with divisions to prioritize their efforts around DEI and developing management plans around their priorities. The team's recommendations were presented to the department's management team in September, and they are moving towards implementation planning with all divisions in February 2021.

Duncan Wyeth asked if it would be feasible to have an outline or addendum of the training, if any of the trainings were on-line, and if there would be an opportunity for council members to participate or listen in on these trainings to gain an understanding of what the department is offering its employees on implicit bias training. Alexis responded that, as they work on more training sessions, she will ask about the ability to share these trainings outside of the state system. If so, Alexis said she would be more than happy to present them to the council in a separate meeting or include them in the training sessions moving forward.

### **EV CHARGING STATIONS UPDATE**

Keith Cheli, Regional Field Planner for the DNR Parks and Recreation Division, gave the council a historical overview and update on the installation of electric vehicle (EV) charging stations on state park lands, his interactions with the department's Energy Team, and the EV Charging Station template that the council endorsed in 2018.

Keith mentioned that the DNR Parks and Recreation Division now has an operating agreement in place with the local electric utility cooperative to install the EV charging stations at the three previously agreed upon locations, which include Presque Isle State Harbor near Alpena along the US-23 corridor, Hoefft State Park outside of Rogers City, and Hammond Bay between Cheboygan and Rogers City. However, with the pandemic installation has been difficult, but it is their hope that the charging stations will be installed in 2021.

Keith is back before the council to request their input on how to move the standard design template for installation of universally accessible EV charging stations to the appropriate agency or parties for consideration as a statewide standard. The Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE) recently reached a settlement with Volkswagen and are using those dollars to provide grants for the installation of EV charging stations around the state. EGLE's Charge Up Michigan program is on the fast track to complete an electric vehicle grid and it is almost impossible to keep up with the momentum right now. Keith is also on the department's Energy Team and would be willing to elevate this template to the Energy Team for their consideration.

After in-depth discussion about the template itself and elevating it to be considered as the statewide standard, it was decided that Keith will take the template to the department's Energy Team for consideration and include it in their talks with EGLE. He will also reach out to Brad Garmon to get his input from an industry perspective and how we can expand it beyond the council or the department's borders.

The council agreed that the time is now before hundreds of EV charging stations are installed that are not accessible to people with disabilities. If this standard is accepted, it should be included in any grant agreements or contracts that the department, EGLE or any other state agency engages in with grantees, vendors, or contractors. Keith added that the state parks system is being approached by a lot of private industries and others to place these stations at parks or recreation facilities. They would have to bid out those installations, but their intent is that contractors or vendors would be required to implement this design for installation of stations on state park lands.

Robert Winn reminded Keith and the council that the placement of these stations should also be near accessible routes to buildings or pathways, especially in state parks or recreation areas where people can access the other amenities while their vehicle is charging.

Duncan Wyeth commented that he has not seen anything come out of the U.S. Access Board or the feds on this issue. Cindy Burkhour said she will check with the U.S. Access Board. She further commented that there may not be anything from the federal government on EV charging stations but that this could fall under parking space requirements. Cindy offered to research and work with the U.S. Access Board, and will be the conduit for the Michigan template.

Keith further commented that EGLE's Charge Up Michigan website has a [state map](#) and a [preferred locations list](#) of funded chargers, and where they are still needed under the [Build Out plan](#).

The council thanked Keith for coming before the council again to discuss this important issue, especially since the installation of EV charging stations is on the fast track. Keith will provide updates as things progress.

## **2020 SUMMER YOUTH PROGRAMS**

Doug Rich, the DNR Parks and Recreation District Supervisor for the Western Upper Peninsula, and Jennifer Hirst, Rehabilitation Consultant with Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) gave a presentation to the council on the 2020 Summer Youth Programs through MRS. Jennifer is a statewide consultant that works with their counselors to provide programming and opportunities around the state. She works with the DNR, mostly with Doug Rich and the state park system, to provide a summer work experience for their students.

Sarah Peurakoski, Executive Director of Superior Alliance for Independent Living (SAIL), also works with MRS counselors and Michigan state parks to offer these programs in the Upper Peninsula.

Doug Rich explained that the Summer Youth Program kicked off in 2008. A former state park District Supervisor had a daughter with disabilities who was interested in programs to engage with the community and provide employment opportunities for youth with disabilities. In its first year, the DNR employed eight students at Traverse City State Park. In 2010, the program expanded to Interlochen State Park and, because of its resounding success, this program is now offered at various state parks and recreation areas throughout the state.

Jennifer Hirst gave an overview of the Summer Youth Program (SYP). The SYP provides work-based learning opportunities and pre-employment transitioning services for students with disabilities in accordance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. Studies show that students who participate in a paid work-based learning program are more likely to work harder, enjoy what they are doing and, as adults, they will be able to transition into the employment world. They also engage with the DNR to provide assistance with park projects over the summer season. It teaches students teamwork, accountability, customer service, and respect for the environment. It also allows local communities and park visitors the opportunity to see students with disabilities in the workforce. Doug commented it is a win-win situation for not only the students but also for the state parks in general to gain additional staff that can carry out the day-to-day activities of running and managing a state park.

Jennifer further reported that they are in the eighth year of this program but, due to Covid, they were only able to employ students at fourteen sites around the state. In prior years, they have been able to provide these employment opportunities at 49 sites around the state. Students may be assigned to specific tasks or work experiences, but they are also taught the importance of being a team player (as well as being accepted as part of a team), while gaining work experience, communication skills, and the opportunity to also interact with the campers and park visitors. It also shows parents who have children with disabilities that there are opportunities for them. Doug further explained that during the summer months, they have hired on short-term working staff and it also provides them the opportunity for future employment with the DNR. They have hired a few great workers from this program.

Jennifer also covered match and cost-sharing that benefits the program and allows them to offer this program and hire more students and on-site trainers. Doug added that the department normally invests up to \$125,000 each year to fund all 49 sites; however, with the spending restrictions this year, they were only able to provide approximately \$50,000 for the 14 sites to keep the program running.

The program also brings awareness to the public and the communities by advertising the parks as disability-friendly employers.

Unfortunately, due to the lack of time, Chair Norris had to cut the presentation short. He asked Doug and Jennifer if they would be willing to come back to a future meeting, and they agreed. In the meantime, the presentation was shared with council members so they could review it and come back with questions at a future meeting. The Chair apologized to the two presenters that we had to cut them short.

### **DNR ADA 30-YEAR ANNIVERSARY PRESENTATION**

Kim Woolridge had to leave the meeting before this topic was addressed. Diana Paiz gave the council a brief overview of the ADA 30-year anniversary webinar that was pulled together by members of the department's A-Team marketing subcommittee, Brad Parsons, the

videographer from Marketing and Outreach, John Pepin, Deputy Public Information Officer, and many others. Members of the council also participated in the webinar to give an overview of the council, as well as their personal experiences and perspectives.

## **DEPARTMENT UPDATES**

### Executive Updates

Sharon Schafer reported that Jared Duquette is the new Wildlife Division Chief. He started with the department on November 30, 2020. Jared grew up in St. Charles, Michigan and, although he is moving here from the State of Illinois Department of Natural Resources, he has been involved in a lot of studies/work with the State of Michigan, including TB (bovine tuberculosis) and CWD (chronic wasting disease) studies, the predator-prey program in the Upper Peninsula, and is heavily involved in recruitment and retention. Sharon offered to add Jared to a future meeting to share his insight and engage with the council.

Sharon also reported the department is still in the process of hiring a Forest Resources Chief. Hopefully, a new chief will be in place soon and he will also be added to a future meeting to meet the council.

### ADA Coordinator Updates

Mike Holsinger reported that the state was recently awarded money to design and build a new customer service center in Newberry. They are in the preliminary design phase and do not anticipate construction to begin until 2022. He also had a recent conversation with Annie Urasky regarding ADA requirements and recommendations for this new facility. Once the department enters the engineering and design phase, Mike will move Annie's recommendations forward for consideration.

### A-Team Updates

Angie Herrera, the A-Team chair, reported that Tamara Jorkasky has stepped down from the team, previously representing the Executive Office. Michelle Coss is a new member, replacing Jordan Byelich as the Parks and Recreation Division representative. Kirk Lapham has moved from Legislative and Legal Affairs to managing the Minerals Section. The A-Team is currently working on identifying desired locations for the placement of accessible wildlife viewing/hunting blinds for future consideration.

### MNRTF Projects Approved for Funding

Andrea Stay, grant coordinator for the southern region of Michigan, reported that the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) Board, at their December meeting, approved 76 acquisition and development projects, totaling \$37.8 million. Twenty-six local and four state acquisition projects were approved, totaling \$27,289,600 for the acquisition of new lands; with 42 local and four state development projects, totaling \$10,500,000 being approved. Detailed information about the awarded grants can be found at the links below:

[2020 Development Project Recommendations](#)

[2020 Acquisition Project Recommendations](#)

The Board's recommendations will now go to the Legislature and the Governor for approval and passage of an appropriations bill before communities can begin working on their approved projects.

Andrea further reported that, unfortunately, the Wells State Park project that was presented to and endorsed by this council, did not score high enough during this round but they would be eligible to apply next year. Also, with the passage of Proposal 1, there may be more opportunity

and more funds available towards development projects next year. However, she thanked the subcommittees and the council for their review, input, and feedback on this project, which did increase this project's accessibility score.

Andrea also highlighted a couple of projects that may be of interest to this council:

The City of Marquette in the Upper Peninsula will be installing a barrier-free accessible playground, similar to Scarlet's Playground that was recently installed at Doge Park #5 in Commerce Township.

In Alberta, Michigan (Benzie County) there is a dune and beach access project where they will install accessible pathways, toilets, lighting, a pavilion, and a beach mat walkway to access the Alberta Pier.

Andrea looks forward to working with the council next year in the review of universally accessible projects.

## **COUNCIL BUSINESS**

### Adoption of 2021 Meeting Dates

Chair Norris announced the meeting dates for 2021. They would be held on February 23, May 18, August 24, and December 7, 2021. Until restrictions have been lifted, the February and possibly the May meetings will be virtual. Otherwise, the proposed meeting locations would be the Lansing Customer Service Center (February and December meetings), the Rose Lake Shooting Range – Glassen Education Center (May meeting) and an off-site location to be determined (August meeting).

The Chair asked council members if there were any issues with the meeting dates. None were offered.

Chair Norris asked for a motion to adopt the 2021 meeting dates.

***Duncan Wyeth motioned to approve the 2021 meeting dates; Robert Winn seconded the motion; the motion unanimously carried, and the 2021 AAC meeting dates were adopted.***

Duncan Wyeth also asked that department staff do a cross-comparison on the continuation of virtual meetings versus in-person meetings moving into 2021. Chair Norris agreed, especially for those members that have quite a distance to travel and require overnight lodging. The Chair also suggested that the council consider a hybrid type of meeting format, whereby allowing those that can meet in-person to do so, while those that are a long distance away would be allowed to participate remotely.

## **COUNCIL UPDATES**

No updates were offered.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

No public comment was offered.

## **CLOSING BUSINESS**

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 23, 2021, and it will be a virtual meeting.

## **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; Bryan Wilkinson seconded the motion; and the meeting was adjourned at 10:45 a.m.***

The council then engaged in a closed session brainstorming session to discuss pending topics and issues they would like to address in 2021.