



ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

MINUTES

June 13, 2023

Laketon Township Hall
2735 W Giles Road, N Muskegon, MI

ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COUNCIL (AAC)

PRESENT	ABSENT
Scott Norris, Chair	Tyra Kahn
Bryan Wilkinson, Co-Chair	Will Purves
Ken Buchholtz	Kimberly Woolridge
Allen Beauchamp (Virtual)	
Cindy Burkhour	
Jessica Stark	
Billy Vickers	
Robert Winn	
Duncan Wyeth (Virtual)	
Michael Harris (Virtual)	
Vendela Collins (Virtual)	
Tina Nowakowski (Virtual)	
Rebecca Powell (Virtual - for Kimberly Wooldridge)	

PRESENT FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES (DNR)

Daniel Lord, AAC Sponsor
Lindsey Henski, Assistant to the AAC
Robyn Afrik, Equity, and Inclusion Officer

PRESENT FROM THE DNR ACCESSIBILITY TEAM (A-TEAM)

David Haupt, *A-Team Chair*, Marketing and Outreach
Cindy Krueger (Virtual), Marketing and Outreach
Rob Corbett (Virtual), Real Estate, Finance and Operations
Michelle O'Kelly, Parks and Recreation
Rachel Coale (Virtual), Forest Resources
Pam Vance (Virtual), Training Advisory Team Representative

OTHERS:

Letty Fox, Janet Jurus, Erica Allen, Travis Chapman, Olivia Jacques, Diana Paiz, Marcus Bandy, and Greg McGinty.

PRESENTERS:

Kristin Phillips, DNR
Tom Weston (Virtual), DNR
Emma Kukuk, DNR
Beth Fults, DNR
Josh Fogel, DNR
Tim Novak, DNR

REGULAR MEETING

OPENING REMARKS

Chair Norris called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and welcomed everyone to the June 13, 2023, Accessibility Advisory Council (Council) meeting.

Chair Norris then took roll call.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chair Norris asked the Council if they had any additions, corrections, or discussion regarding the March 7, 2023, minutes.

Chair Norris requested a motion to approve the March 7, 2023, minutes as written.

Duncan Wyeth motioned to approve the minutes; Allen Beauchamp seconded the motion; the motion unanimously carried, the March 7, 2023, minutes are approved.

DEPARTMENT UPDATES

DNR Executive Updates – Kristin Phillips

A Department of Natural Resources (DNR) director has not been named yet. Shannon Lott continues as acting director for the DNR. Robin Afrik has been hired as the DNR's new Equity and Inclusion officer. Other staffing changes include Jon Speiles, Marketing and Outreach Division Chief; Randy Claramunt, Fisheries Division Chief; and Sara Thompson, Acting Wildlife Division Chief. Trevor VanDyke has accepted a new position with the Michigan Supreme Court; a new Legislative and Legal Affairs Director will be named soon. The DNR is working through the legislative process for our FY24 budget with two different versions from the House and the Senate.

ADA Coordinator Updates – Dan Lord

Mike Holsinger, ADA Coordinator, retired at the end of May. His position was posted, and interviews are complete. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is in Michigan completing the on-site audit portion of their Accessibility Audit. A Limited English Proficiency plan was flagged by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Coast Guard in a recent audit. You will be hearing an update on that today.

A-Team Updates – Dave Haupt

Diana Paiz has retired, leaving a vacancy on the DNR A-Team. Cindy Krueger has also stepped down as Co-Chair of the A-Team. Michelle O'Kelly has volunteered to be Co-Chair, along with filling in for Diana Paiz as the A-Team representative for the DNR New Employee Orientation meetings. The Come Out and Play at the Capitol event is coming up on June 28, 2023. The DNR will participate and display accessible equipment. Hunter Education Instructor training is coming up in July. Some A-Team and Council members will be participating to demonstrate different accessible hunting equipment. A-Team members will be producing training videos at the hunter education training for future broadcasting and training reference.

Limited English Proficiency – Emma Kukuk

Dan Lord shared that Craig Brunet is the DNR liaison on the Federal Interagency Working Group (Work Group) on Limited English Proficiency (LEP). Cindy Burkhour asked if the plan is just for foreign speaking individuals or if the plan includes cognitive impairments as well. Emma Kukuk shared a presentation from the Work Group. LEP is more than spoken language; it's about accessible signage and informed communication. The Work Group was charged by U.S.

Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Coast Guard to create the necessary policy, procedures, and processes for a compliant LEP plan by September 1, 2023. In Michigan, nearly 700,000 residents are foreign-born, of that population (over 16 years old), 80% speak a language other than English in their home. We have a responsibility as a state agency to make our facilities, resources, and experiences available and easily accessible to everyone. The Work Group has representation from almost every division and section within the DNR, with many team members being multilingual. Work Group members are incredibly passionate about this topic and are committed to building a comprehensive foundational policy. Our LEP plan is in the draft stage with the Work Group working off the already approved plans published by the Michigan Department of Transportation and Michigan State Police.

Cindy Burkhour asked who on the Work Group is representing individuals with cognitive impairments? Emma Kukuk replied that she is. Vendella Collins stated that the Work Group should want someone with real world lived experience. She also noted that the culture competency piece is very important as words have different meanings based on culture. Duncan Wyeth commented that the Jade Project based out of Marquette is very active in making nonverbal symbol communication boards. Perhaps a Project Jade member would be interested in joining the Work Group. Michael Harris inquired if there are existing technologies that can help with some of the communication problems. Emma Kukuk stated there are multiple technologies out there, and the Work Group is looking into them. Vendella Collins asked if federal funding is an issue since this is a Title VI, Civil Rights Act topic? Dan Lord replied yes, the lack of an LEP plan was flagged by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Coast Guard audits. Therefore, federal funding concerns are behind putting this plan in place. Cindy Burkhour suggested reaching out to advocacy organizations that support people with cognitive and communication issues such as the Michigan Autism Society when the policy is ready for public review. Emma Kukuk stated that communication is inherently a two-way street. The Work Group is very committed to having those discussions with different groups before the policy goes into affects. Chair Norris recommended reaching out to the Bureau of Services for Blind Persons for review and discussion as well.

Adaptive Sports Card – Tom Weston

Tom Weston summarized pending updates to the DNR Hunt Fish App. In August 2023, the Hunt from Standing Vehicle and Disability Bow Permit will be added to the DNR Hunt Fish App under customer declarations. This is in addition to a veteran who is 100% disabled or individually unemployable, and legally blind. We are also working with Law Enforcement Division to potentially add the permit accreditation for Laser Sighted Devices.

Water Trails – Tim Novak

The Water Trails Program has dedicated funding proposals in the legislature. If approved that funding would be used for signage, safety markers, and accessibility improvements/equipment. Cindy Burkhour asked Tim Novak if he was working with Harry Burkholder of Land Information Access Association (LIAA)? They have completed a lot of water trail accessibility evaluations throughout the state.

Track Chair Reservations – Josh Fogel

Josh Fogel described how track chair reservations are handled at Muskegon State Park. Individuals reserve the track chair by calling the park directly. The track chair is stored at the headquarters and transported to and from the location requested by a park ranger. Other state parks use different reservation methods. Cindy Burkhour asked about making the track chair more visible, so visitor know a track chair is an option. Storing it inside the headquarters seems counterproductive. On a day the track chair is not reserved, could it be placed outside with signage, so visitors know it's available? Michelle O'Kelly replied that placing the chair outside at all facilities as a policy may not be feasible. But producing signage that a track chair is available

at a specific state park is possible. Dan Lord commented that perhaps a symbol or sign could be added to accessible parking posts. Dan Lord asked about the types of requests Muskegon State Park receives for track chair use and any notable trends? Josh Fogel replied that most requests are for use at the beach since Muskegon has 3/4 mile of accessible beach. In the fall, use requests shift to the trails. Michael Harris mentioned an article in the Detroit Free Press that talked about track chairs.

Article and Video can be found at the below links –

<https://www.detroitnews.com/videos/media/video/2023/06/03/opens-up-whole-different-world-people-disabilities/11991662002/>

<https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/michigan/2023/06/02/track-chairs-take-those-with-disabilities-off-road-at-michigans-parks/70242001007/>

Ask the DNR – Dave Haupt

John Pepin runs Ask the DNR in the Upper Peninsula along with Stacy Welling-Haughey. They are working to get some accessibility mentions on the show. They will be working with Allen Beauchamp to feature some specific accessibility topics. Dan Lord added that in addition to Ask the DNR, there is another platform called Media Meets that John Pepin and Stacy Welling-Haughey will coordinate accessible topics with Allen Beauchamp, Duncan Wyeth, and Ken Buchholtz.

Broadening Access to the Outdoors – Kristin Phillips

Broadening Access to the Outdoors is a title given to a proposal for funding the DNR submitted to the governor's office. The goal is to broaden access to the opportunities and services the DNR provides. Looking at demographics, there are areas we can focus on adding resources to be more inclusive. The \$1.5 million proposal would include signage, printed materials, and staffing positions. Positions would include a full-time accessibility coordinator, another position looking at interpreting our history, and four positions in our urban areas – Flint, Lansing, Ann Arbor and Grand Rapids. Chair Norris recommended that the Becoming and Outdoor Woman (BOW) program could add some classes for the blind or expand the program to different parts of the state. Duncan Wyeth followed up on the BOW program, stating it is currently conducted at Bay Cliff Camp in Marquette. Bay Cliff is incredibly accessible. Perhaps BOW could work with different accessibility networks and do education and outreach to women with disabilities. If the outreach provided a sufficient response, maybe we could hold an exclusive disability BOW session at Bay Cliff. Cindy Burkhour recommended that in the spirit of equity and inclusion, the DNR should reach out and invite women with disabilities to the BOW program. We should engage the disabled community in traditional activities, not simply create opportunities specifically for the disabled community alone.

DNR Website – Accessibility and Consistency – Beth Fults

Beth Fults, Marketing Manager, recently met with staff to discuss consistency. They reviewed the recreation search page and have requested updates from park supervisors. The recreation search platform is outdated and the DNR is looking to replace it. The DNR is currently evaluating software and meeting with corporations. Tom Weston commented that bids will go out this summer, 2023.

Cindy Burkhour stated the information that is needed on the website is not only 'accessible equipment available' but details including what equipment, where it is located, and how to obtain access to it. Adding images can also aid in citizen decision-making.

Be-Adaptive Equipment Demonstration – Bryan Wilkinson

A Be-Adaptive field demonstration was conducted at Rose Lake Shooting Range on April 17, 2023. Be-Adaptive manufactures adaptive shooting and fishing equipment for all physical abilities. DNR shooting ranges are incorporating some of this equipment to give more individuals the opportunity to participate in shooting sports. Shooting range staff from multiple locations were present at the demonstration and they are looking at how to incorporate more of this equipment at facilities beyond Rose Lake.

You can read more about Be Adaptive Equipment at the following link –

[Be Adaptive Equipment | Made in the USA](#)

COUNCIL BUSINESS

Spectrum Health Limb Loss Support Group – Scott Norris

Dan Lord and Cindy Burkhour presented at the Spectrum Health Limb Loss Support Group on April 12, 2023. It was a small group with attendance in-person and virtual. Attendees were very welcoming and engaged. Spectrum would like us back on September 13, 2023, at 5:30 p.m. in Grand Rapids. Chair Norris volunteered to attend in September. Dan Lord and Dave Haupt will work on a DNR representative. The content of the presentation will be tailored by season along with the current list of available resources.

Proposed Deer Regulation Changes – Jessica Stark

At the Councils March 7, 2023, meeting Taylor Ridderbusch provided a mentor hunt proposal update. Jessica Stark commented that it was recommended that the language in the current mentor hunt be modified from a parent or guardian to include guide or adult. Dan Lord received feedback from Taylor Ridderbusch that the proposal remains with the legislature. We are looking for movement this fall.

Jessica Stark asked if Hunter Safety Instructors know that they will have a student with a disability coming to a class, who can they reach out to with questions, and how do we accommodate field days for persons with disabilities? Chair Norris stated that Erica Moore and Tom Wanless with Law Enforcement Division are the appropriate contacts. Dan Lord will work with Erica Moore and Tom Wanless about adding contact information to the Hunter Safety Instructor webpage.

COUNCIL UPDATES

Hunter Safety Instructor Training: RAM Center – Bryan Wilkinson

Dave Haupt stated that videos will be produced by Wardens at the Hunter Safety Instructor Training at the RAM Center in July. A list of topics will need to be developed along with identifying who will be presenting in these videos. These accessibility demonstration videos can then be made available online and to share.

July 27, 2023, is the Hunter Safety Instructor Training at the RAM Center. A lot of Council members participated last year, and the instructors really appreciated our efforts. Dave Haupt will coordinate another meeting to identify topics, presenters, and details prior to the July 27 training. Bryan Wilkinson is planning to attend with track chairs.

Chair Norris asked who is planning to attend: Bryan Wilkinson, Billy Vickers, Ken Buchholtz, Jessica Stark, Dave Haupt, Scott Norris, Lindsey Henski, Tina Nowakowski, Michael Harris.

Roundtable

Billy Vickers – The Council for Metro Parks organizes disability dirt days, adaptive kayaking, adaptive golf and more. Billy Vickers asked why the DNR does not organize disability events

utilizing the tools and resources that are available? These organized events could show case different DNR locations, launches, and other opportunities. Dan Lord replied that a lot of the landing places for these events would be within State Parks. Michelle O’Kelly stated she could be the point person to begin a process like that. Billy Vickers clarified that he is looking for the DNR to orchestrate the event. Dan Lord stated we are the place organizations come to hold the event, but we haven’t historically organized the events. With the Broadening Access to the Outdoors initiative, the DNR could become more involved. Cindy Burkhour suggested every State Park with a track chair host a “Hiking for Everyone’ day. Other ideas include adaptive kayaking or adaptive fishing. Programs like these could be included in Explorer Programs ran by park interpreters. Michelle O’Kelly will start the conversation with Parks and Recreation. Dan Lord suggested establishing a meeting with a sub-set of Council members to continue this idea.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Duncan Wyeth asked Dan Lord to schedule a meeting with Robyn Afrik, Duncan Wyeth, Scott Norris, Michael Harris, Vendella Collins, and Dan Lord to discuss diversity on the Council. Duncan Wyeth suggested having tribal representation and increased racial diversity.

Michael Harris recommended Mario Dixon to represent the African American population. Vendella Collins and Billy Vickers supported the recommendation for Mario Dixon. Chair Norris outlined the procedure to apply to the board; submit an application, cover letter and resume which will be vetted by the council, a background check completed, and approved by the DNR Director. The application form for appointment will be distributed with these meeting minutes.

CLOSING BUSINESS

The next Council meeting is September 12, 2023, location to be determined.

ADJOURN

Chair Norris requested a motion to adjourn.

Cindy Burkhour motioned for adjournment; Ken Buchholtz seconded the motion; the motion unanimously carried; meeting adjourned at 12:21 p.m.