



ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

MINUTES

March 7, 2023

DNR Lansing Customer Service Center
Lower-Level Conference Room
4166 Legacy Parkway, Lansing

ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COUNCIL (AAC)

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

PRESENT FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES (DNR)

Daniel Lord, AAC Sponsor
Michael Holsinger, ADA Coordinator
Lindsey Henski, Assistant to the AAC

PRESENT FROM THE DNR ACCESSIBILITY TEAM (A-TEAM)

David Haupt, *A-Team Chair*, Marketing and Outreach
Cindy Krueger, Marketing and Outreach
Alex Galloway, Grants, Finance and Operations
Michelle O'Kelly, Parks and Recreation

OTHERS:

Melissa Wanink and Olivia Jacques with Lighthouse Neuro Rehab Center

PRESENTERS:

Jason Fleming, DNR
Tom Weston, DNR

REGULAR MEETING

OPENING REMARKS

Chair Norris called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Chair Norris then took roll call.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chair Norris asked the council if they had any additions, corrections, or discussion regarding the December 6, 2022, minutes.

Chair Norris requested a motion to approve the December 6, 2022, minutes.

Duncan Wyeth motioned to approve the minutes; Cindy Burkhour seconded the motion; the motion unanimously carried, and the December 6, 2022, minutes were approved.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

2023 expiring terms include: Scott Norris, Tom Jones, Kenneth Buchholtz, Tyra Khan, and Billy Vickers. Scott Norris, Kenneth Buchholtz, Tyra Khan and Bill Vickers will continue with the Council. Tom Jones stepped down as Co-Chair and will be leaving the Council in 2023. There are currently three vacancies on the Council including an outdoor advocacy representative, a representative from the Deaf Community, and a representative from the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. Interested individuals should contact Scott Norris and Lindsey Henski.

Appointment of Chair and Co-Chair: Scott Norris will remain Chair. Duncan Wyeth nominated Bryan Wilkinson as Co-Chair.

Chair Norris requested a motion to approve Bryan Wilkinson as Co-Chair.

Duncan Wyeth motioned to approve; Billy Vickers seconded the motion; the motion unanimously carried; Bryan Wilkinson will now serve as Accessibility Advisory Council Co-Chair.

E-BIKES AS ADAPTIVE EQUIPMENT AND TRAIL USE

PRD Policy/Procedure Change Update

Jason Fleming with Parks and Recreation Division (PRD) summarized the discussion on e-bikes at our December Council meeting.

Class One – Provides assistance ONLY when the operator is pedaling and has a max speed of 20 mph.

Class Two – Provides assistance without the use of pedaling and has a max speed of 20 mph.

Class Three – Provides assistance ONLY when the operator is pedaling and has a max speed of 28 mph.

There is a statute the details where e-bikes can and cannot be used. E-bikes are restricted on natural surface bike trails. There is a caveat in statute that allows review of that at the local level that requires a public review process. PRD has reviewed their permit process to determine the best use for the customer, impact to the resource, and staff administration. PRD has recommended allowing class one e-bikes on natural surface bike trails while utilizing the use permit process for class two e-bikes on natural surface bike trails. This change will be discussed with advisory groups and taken to the NRC as part of the review process.

Cindy Burkhour asked about the difference between a Personal Mobility Assistance Device (PMAD) and an e-bike. Jason Fleming commented that the review was specific to the statute and that there are other policies in place to address PMAD's.

Mike Holsinger asked about the use of e-bikes on pedestrian trails that do not allow bike use. Jason Fleming replied the use of an e-bike as a PMAD on those trails would be at pedestrian speed. Mike Holsinger asked if a permit is required to use an e-bike on a hiking trail as a PMAD? Jason Fleming stated yes, a use permit from the local unit would be necessary.

Mike Harris asked if there is a fee for the use permit? Jason Fleming responded no.

Tyra Khan asked about the turn around time on a use permit. Jason Fleming stated use permits are handled at the local level. The language on the forms states to allow for up to 60 days. But depending on local staff availability, a use permit could be issued the same day.

Rob Winn asked if use permits are good for the day/season? Jason Fleming responded that use permits are typically written for one year.

Dan Lord asked about the communication plan associated with this change and evaluation. Jason Fleming responded that talking points will be developed for our staff, as well as a landing page on our website that would include frequently asked questions and answers. PRD will also share this information with advisory councils for their dissemination.

Duncan Wyeth requested a summary sheet citing the statute and current PRD recommendations for those that serve on County and Township boards. Duncan also mentioned that fat tire bikes are becoming e-bikes as well and cause damage to groomed trails. Jason Fleming stated that a policy draft can be shared and that a limitation on time frames or types of use should be discussed with the local trail specialist.

ADAPTIVE SPORTSCARD

Tom Weston summarized previous discussions on the adaptive sportscard where the Department decided not to use an actual card. Instead, the Department is planning to incorporate customer declarations in the Hunt Fish Application. The customer declaration page currently includes Legally Blind, Active US Military, and Disabled Veteran. The Hunt From a Standing Vehicle and Modified Bow permits will be added to this customer declaration page. This change should take place by the summer of 2023. Tom Weston will follow-up with Law Enforcement Division regarding adding Laser Sighted Devices to the customer declaration page as well.

WATER TRAILS

Tim Novak was unable to attend. This topic has been moved to June 2023.

MENTORED HUNTER PROGRAM

The Department has proposed legislation to expand the mentored youth hunt to a mentored hunt. The change would allow for individuals who are unable to pass a hunter certification class to continue to be able to participate in outdoor hunting opportunities with direct supervision. The Department plans to have something submitted to the legislature this month, but then we will have to work through the legislative process.

Jessica Stark detailed Hunt 2 Heal, a new organization near Bitely, MI. This organization was started to help disabled individuals get back into hunting. Unlike the private buck ranches, where a license is not needed, this facility requires a hunting license however, some individuals are unable to acquire a hunter safety certificate. Jessica mentioned that the wording in our

legislative proposal should mention guides, not only parent/guardian. Hunt 2 Heal has also proposed assisting with the field portion of the hunter safety class for those individuals who can pass the class/online portion but need accommodations/adaptive equipment for the field portion.

Dan Lord asked if a subset of the Council would be willing to review or provide guidance on the proposed legislation? Dave Haupt responded that we have a Legislative Sub-Committee. Chair Norris is an ex-officio member, along with Tyra Khan, Vendella Collins, and Tom Jones. Taylor Ridderbusch will share a draft version with the Legislative Sub-Committee via Scott Norris (NorrisS5@michigan.gov). Ken Buchholtz and Will Purves offered to review the draft also.

DEPARTMENT UPDATES

DNR Executive Updates

Dan Lord, AAC Sponsor, highlighted some changes within the Department at the agency level. Director Dan Eichinger is taking on a temporary role as the Acting Director of the Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) starting January 1, 2023. Deputy Director Shannon Lott will be moving into the Acting Director role for the Department, and Scott Whitcomb will be acting Deputy Director. Jim Dexter, Fisheries Division Chief has announced his retirement. Randy Claramunt has been named the new Fisheries Division Chief.

Dan Lord also detailed the budget development process and a potential \$1.5 million-dollar ongoing investment called Broadening the Outdoors. This would be to promote participation in engagement and outdoor recreation and foster knowledge of natural resource conservation among traditionally underserved populations. Details are still being developed.

Dan Lord shared a draft itinerary for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service accessibility field audit taking place in June. The field audit will overlap with the Council's June meeting. Limited English Proficiency is part of this audit as well as part of the U.S. Coast Guard audit. Craig Brunet is leading the development of a Limited English Proficiency plan.

Ask the DNR/Spotlight Articles

Stacy Haughey, UP Field Deputy provided the following written update.

Ask the DNR Topics on Accessibility & Showcasing the DNR Articles on Accessibility

- *Ask the DNR TV Series (UP and northern Wisconsin Audience on WNMU-TV13 PBS):*
 - The show airs five times each season. Broadcasts are typically October, November, December, April and May (none in May 2023 due to remodeling). All shows are live at 8 p.m. on Thursdays. Topics center around activities that usually occur in the month in which the shows are aired or are upcoming such as November-hunting, April-fishing, for example. DNR staff are live on air in a round-table setting, answering viewer questions posed by a host who reads and directs questions to the appropriate panelist to answer.
 - The program is coordinated by John Pepin, Deputy Public Information Officer, in association with TV-13 station staff. John Pepin selects the panelists for the shows and reviews questions coming into the show before they reach the panel. Questions not answered on the air are answered in follow-up phone calls from panelists or other DNR staffers.
 - Although April 2023 episode's topics may already be determined, is there anyone who would like to talk about DNR accessibility programs or initiatives for a 2023-2024 season broadcast?
 - Show dates for the new season are typically announced in late August.

- *Showcasing Articles on Accessibility:*
 - The Showcasing the DNR series is increasingly popular. The number of subscribers has climbed from about 15,000 in 2016 to more than 35,000 now.
 - Several articles focused partially or entirely on accessibility issues have been featured as part of the Showcasing the DNR series. Among them:
 - New statewide outdoor recreation plan offers wealth of insights, 1/12/23
 - Do you see what I see (colorblind viewers at Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park), 9/8/22
 - New pedestrian bridge set in place at Lower Tahquamenon Falls; Bridge set to open in October will offer improved access for all to experience, 9/8/21
 - A searchable story archive is available at www.Michigan.gov/DNRStories.
 - New Showcasing story authors are always welcome and highly encouraged. Stories range from 800-1,500 words. Stories are due a week prior to scheduled publication dates and also typically include about a half-dozen photographs.
 - John Pepin is the editor and coordinator of the series. Assistance is provided to any writers either new or seeking help with their stories.
 - If anyone (in conjunction with a DNR employee) would be interested in writing an article about a DNR accessibility story, John Pepin would be happy to reach out to that person.

ADA Coordinator Updates

Mike Holsinger, ADA Coordinator, shared that e-bikes are a hot topic and is glad to see PRD making some changes. Mike Holsinger shared he is retiring at the end of May and that this will be his last Council meeting.

A-Team Updates

2022 Highlights

Cindy Krueger provided a write-up on accessibility that is featured in the upcoming DNR 2022 Accomplishments Report. The write-up includes track chairs, EnCroma lenses, and accessible kayak/canoe launches, and adjustable ski equipment.

Grant Application Project and Review

Alex Galloway shared that FY2022 Grant awards for Trust Fund, Land and Water Conservation Fund, and Recreation Passport programs were announced in December. Lists of successful projects are available on the respective program page at the bottom of Recreation Grants (michigan.gov). Spark round 1 ended December 19th. The team is currently reviewing over 462 applications - more than double the normal number of applications received in a given year across all 3 aforementioned programs.

COUNCIL BUSINESS

Spectrum Health Limb Loss Support Group

Scott Norris commented that Dan Lord and Cindy Burkhour will be presenting at the Spectrum Health Limb Loss Support Group April 12, 2023. We are still looking for volunteers for the September 13, 2023, meeting. Cindy Burkhour volunteered to present at both meetings.

ADAPTIVE EQUIPMENT

How many reservations in 2022?

Michelle O'Kelly stated we have 11 state parks with 16 total track chairs. In 2022, we had 490 reservations.

How many reservations do not show up?

Michelle O'Kelly commented that we do not track no-shows. Cindy Burkhour asked for the number of 'on-demand' reservations. Duncan Wyeth asked how many of the reservations were made in the winter? Michelle O'Kelly stated she did not ask for that level of breakdown. She will follow-up with on-demand use and use per month.

Michelle O'Kelly will work with marketing to complete another push on track chair availability and locations.

Cindy Burkhour discussed the adaptive equipment process and shared her experience using the website and making reservations. Cindy Burkhour stated that any accessible adaptive equipment, like the action track chair and beach wheelchairs should be available anytime the park is open. However, some equipment is only available Monday – Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. It's awful that you can't use the beach wheelchair to watch a sunset. How can we make this equipment more visible and available? Cindy Burkhour mentioned making the equipment visible, adding GPS to our equipment, and potentially a self-checkout kiosk option (similar to public scooters). Cindy Burkhour also commented that our website should detail the type of equipment, show pictures, and review the clickable icons for accessibility details. If the website landing page states there is a beach wheelchair, the water access icon should detail where and how to gain access to the beach wheelchair. There are a lot of inconsistencies.

Michelle O'Kelly commented that Cindy Krueger with Marketing and Outreach Division is a good contact to look into website updates. Dan Lord commented that there are multiple layers to answering 'who's responsible' for updating the webpages. There are layers of communication from the local park up the chain to detail that information. The Department is looking at different tools to evaluate features with a consistent set of questions. That tool is not fully developed yet.

Cindy Krueger discussed the process of gathering information from the park and inputting that information. We are working on improving our processes.

ADAPTIVE EQUIPMENT DEMONSTRATION

Be-Adaptive will be present at Rose Lake Shooting Range on April 17, 2023, for a field demonstration on a variety of accessible equipment.

SUB-COMMITTEE UPDATE ON SAFETY VIDEOS

Jessica Stark detailed a Sub-Committee meeting that was conducted regarding filming some accessibility videos. The Sub-Committee discussed who to contact, where, and what to film. Similar to last year, the Council will be present at the Hunter Safety Education Instructor Academy at the RAM Center on Thursday, July 27. Filming of the accessibility tutorial videos will be completed while on-site at the Academy with adaptive equipment present.

COUNCIL UPDATES

Roundtable

Bryan Wilkinson – Busy with disability sports in southeast Michigan. Planning summer activities with wheelchair tennis. In Novi Michigan right now, we are the first business created around wheelchair users with access to a tennis simulator.

Jessica Stark – Partnering with Interlochen State Park for a couple kayak clinics. Pickle U is doing an indoor pickle ball facility in Traverse City. They approached us asking about accessibility, wanting to partner with the program.

Billy Vickers – Things are ramping up. Bryan Wilkinson and Billy Vickers did talk with Tim Novak regarding future cycle trail meetings. Tim said he will keep them aware of upcoming meetings. The United Spinal summer kickoff event will be a Topp Golf fundraising outing on

May 11. The schedule is prepared for disability dirt days. This event has really grown, and we received a large donation from Lafontaine (car dealership) this year.

Robert Winn – Disability Network is starting up our adaptive kayaking program again this year. We will be helping at disability dirt days with multiple partners and employees.

Michael Harris – We will be hosting a Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) awareness event in April. We are partnering with Madonna University on April 27 with 10 - 15 vendors on-site displaying products that enhance quality of life for people with disabilities.

Will Purves – The Center for Independent Living just went through a rebranding. We are now called Disability Network Washtenaw, Monroe, Livingston. We have started to do an increasing number of accessibility program evaluations in supporting non-profits in improving their program offerings.

Allen Beauchamp – Been doing some down-hill skiing and sled hockey. Unfortunately, I broke my leg while playing sled hockey. I have been working with an organization in Houghton County area called ELK (Equipment Loans for the Keweenaw). Helping them start a sled hockey program in the Keweenaw area. Excited for snow to go so we can get some accessible kayak launches put in.

Cindy Burkhour – Distributed some postcards detailing a presentation that is going to be held at the MSU museum. It's about knowing nature and the stories of the Boreal Orielis Forest presented by the Smithsonian, Audubon Society, and MSU. The Grants Sub-Committee is looking for a volunteer to replace Tom Jones. Jessica Stark volunteered.

Duncan Wyeth – Accessible Keweenaw Initiative meeting will take place June 13, 2023. Duncan just saw a 20-minute feature on Becoming an Outdoor Women. Maybe over the next year the Council can partner with them to get some women with disabilities into our outdoor programs.

Ken Buchholtz – Turnkey hunting starts April 22. We take about 20+ people out. At the end of school year, Camp Skeeter, goes to the Pocket Park where we have fishing and pellet gun archery along with lots of other offerings.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment was offered.

CLOSING BUSINESS

The next Council meeting is June 13, 2023, at Laketon Township Hall in Muskegon.

Chair Norris thanked Neal McKenzie and Mike Holsinger for their service on the Council.

ADJOURN

Chair Norris requested a motion to adjourn.

Cindy Burkhour motioned for adjournment; Jessica Stark seconded the motion; the motion unanimously carried; meeting adjourned at 12:34 p.m.