



**Eastern Upper Peninsula Citizen Advisory Council (EUPCAC)  
Meeting Minutes – APPROVED 3/12/26  
Tuesday, December 16, 2025  
6:00-8:30pm Eastern  
Virtual via Zoom**

**Council Members Present**

Ken Collier	Robert Liebermann	Joe Smith
Jeff Cox	Mark Maida	Les Therrian
Steve Dey, Secretary	Glenn Moll	Julie Weist
Gary Gorniak, Vice Chair	Tom Paquin	Tony Wright
Tim Hass	Dennis Patchakos	
John Kurkowski	Dick Pershinske	

**Council Members Excused/Absent**

Grant Dewitt	Bernie Hubbard	Mark Spencer
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**Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Staff & Guests**

PJ Costa, Parks & Recreation Division-Eastern UP Trails, Newberry  
Eric Cowing, Parks & Recreation Division, Newberry  
Derek Cross, Forest Resources Division, Cadillac  
Kristi Dahlstrom, UPCAC Assistant, Executive Division, Marquette  
John DePue, Wildlife Division, Baraga  
Cory Kovacs, Fisheries Division, Newberry  
Dave Lemmien, Wildlife Division, Sault Ste. Marie  
Scott Lakosky, Forest Resources Division, Newberry  
Lt. Mark Zitnik, Law Enforcement Division, Newberry

I. **Welcome & Call to Order**

At 6:00pm Eastern, **Chair Paquin** called the meeting to order. He welcomed members of the public as well as DNR staff and fellow Council members.

II. **Roll Call of Virtual Attendees/Confirm Quorum**

At **Chair Paquin's** request, **Ms. Dahlstrom** conducted a roll call of attendees from the virtual participant list. She indicated a quorum was present for the purpose of conducting Council business and thanked **Mr. Kovacs** for leading the meeting in Mrs. Haughey's absence.

**Mr. Kovacs** noted the Council's purpose and provided a brief overview of the Council's advisory role as chartered by the DNR, public comment opportunities during the meeting and virtual meeting etiquette.

III. **Adoption of Agenda**

**Chair Paquin** asked the Council if there were any corrections or additions to the agenda; none were brought forth. **Mr. Cox motioned to adopt the agenda as presented; Mr. Hass**

**supported the motion. After no discussion, Chair Paquin called for a vote on the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

IV. **Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes**

**Chair Paquin** asked if there were any changes to the August 21, 2025, EUPCAC draft meeting minutes or to the Joint UPCAC October 8, 2025 draft meeting minutes, which were both distributed to the Council via email previously for review. **Mr. Patchakos motioned to accept the minutes as submitted; Vice Chair Gorniak supported the motion. After no discussion, Chair Paquin called for a vote on the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

V. **Reports from DNR Division Staff**

Written staff reports were provided to Council members on December 9, 2025. The following brief updates were added.

1. Cory Kovacs, Fisheries Division
  - a. There were no additional updates to the report. Fisheries staff are in their work planning stage, getting equipment ready and/or repaired for the coming year and planning for the next field sampling season.
2. Scott Lakosky, Forest Resources Division
  - a. There were no additional updates to the report and no questions brought forward.
3. Lt. Mark Zitnik, Law Enforcement Division (District 2)
  - a. District 2 (eastern UP) is almost at full staff with three new officers starting regular duty soon: Alex French-Luce County, Joe Budnick-Mackinac County and Matt Bowser-Delta County.
  - b. Officers are busy with late season hunting checks, fisher and martin seasons and ice safety warnings.
4. Eric Cowing, Parks & Recreation Division
  - a. Seasonal staff are in layoff status for a few months.
  - b. Stewardship work at Tahquamenon Falls checking for hemlock wholly adelgid is taking place during the off season. There have been no detections so far.
5. PJ Costa, Parks & Recreation Division-Eastern UP Trails
  - a. With the recent snow, clubs are getting out and grooming in some locations. There have been a few mechanical issues, but these are normal challenges.
6. Dave Lemmien, Wildlife Division
  - a. There were no additional updates to the report.
  - b. **Vice Chair Gorniak** asked for clarification on the snow depth chart in the division report, questioning the effect of snow depth on deer in the northern UP due to southern UP migration patterns. **Mr. Lemmien** suggested a presentation by Mr. Dave Jentoft and Mr. Caleb Eckloff at a future EUPCAC meeting to explain the snow depth modeling process.

- c. **Secretary Dey** asked how the legislative freeze on funding has affected the divisions. **Mr. Kovacs** indicated that specific details on divisional impacts have not been determined. However, he estimates several projects and equipment may be impacted. **Mr. Dey** noted several natural resource-related projects for his affiliated sportsman’s club have been frozen.

VI. **Public Comments on Agenda Items Only**

**Chair Paquin** opened the floor for public comments on agenda items only; none were brought forward.

VII. **Old Business**

1. Wolf Management Update (Lemmien)

- a. This has been a standing agenda item for several years at the request of the Council.
- b. **Mr. Lemmien** responded to Vice Chair Gorniak’s request for an update on the lower peninsula (LP) wolf survey from February 17 to March 10, 2025. The survey was conducted utilizing a community-based approach in the northern LP to detect any potential presence of gray wolves. Because wolves would be at a very low density, if present in the LP, staff relied heavily on reports of wolf sightings from the public as well as other potential evidence. The survey was conducted in partnership with other DNR divisions and the US Department of Agriculture’s Wildlife Services, the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians, Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, and the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians.
- c. Previous historical observations of wolves in the northern LP were in 2004 when a wolf collared in Mackinac County was killed in Presque Isle County, in 2014 when a second wolf was identified through genetic analysis of a scat sample in Emmet County and lastly in 2024 when a wolf, thought to be a coyote, was harvested by a hunter in Calhoun County (and is still under investigation).
- d. From the survey, the DNR investigated 104 reports received from the public. 44 of these reports submitted had evidence to review, and of those, roughly 75% were determined to be coyotes and roughly 25% were determined to be dogs. The DNR, along with Tribal partners and USDA Wildlife Services did not find any tracks that warranted eDNA collection (a new type of method/technology in which a casting is taken of a fresh track to collect skin follicles and hair to test for DNA). The use of trail cameras, similar to what is being used in the UP, will also be an important tool in future LP surveys.
- e. In conclusion, there was no evidence of wolves found in the LP in 2025 during this survey period. This does not mean that there isn’t a single wolf in existence, rather, if they do exist, it is at such a low level that their presence could not be detected by the methods utilized. The DNR will continue to accept observations and field calls from the public in the LP or investigate “eyes in the field” submissions on the DNR’s website.
- f. **Vice Chair Gorniak** thanked Mr. Lemmien for the follow-up report.

2. Follow-Up from August & Joint Meetings

- a. There were no follow-up items from the previous two meetings.

## VIII. **New Business**

1. White Nose Syndrome Update (DePue)
  - a. In a slide presentation, **Mr. DePue**, DNR bat specialist and ACP coordinator, covered bat conservation in Michigan, including the state's nine bat species, their ecological importance, and the impact of white nose syndrome, a fungal disease causing significant population declines in several bat species.
  - b. Bats of Michigan:
    - 1) Nine species, all insectivores (primary nocturnal insect predator).
    - 2) Two federally endangered bat species: Indiana Bat, Northern long-eared bat, Tri-colored bats listing decision delayed.
    - 3) All have legal protection in Michigan.
    - 4) Long lived, big brown bats 30+ years in wild.
  - c. Why Should We Care About Bats? Economic Importance.
    - 1) Pest control benefits \$3.7 – \$53 billion / year nationally.
    - 2) Michigan agriculture \$528 million to \$1.2 billion annually (2011). ~\$74 per farmed acre.
    - 3) Increase in insecticide use increased infant mortality (F.G. Eyal. Science 385, eadog0344 (2024).
  - d. What is White Nose Syndrome (WNS)?
    - 1) Disease caused by a fungus.
    - 2) *Pseudogymnoascus destructans (Pd)*.
    - 3) Causes energy depletion.
    - 4) Impacts whole suite of cave bat species: little brown, northern long-eared, tri-colored, and big brown bats.
  - e. WNS in Michigan
    - 1) Michigan in 12<sup>th</sup> year of infection.
    - 2) All hibernacula have presence of WNS.
  - f. WNS Impacts in Michigan
    - 1) Survey data indicates 89% decline of the sites surveyed post-WNS infection.
    - 2) Colder hibernacula continue to have higher survival.
  - g. Michigan DNR Bat Conservation Actions
    - 1) Statewide bat monitoring: disease, population.
    - 2) Protect critical hibernacula.
    - 3) WNS treatment trials.
    - 4) Outreach/ education.
    - 5) Bat Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP).
    - 6) Work with partners to accomplish conservation goals.
  - h. Hibernaculum Climate Manipulation
    - 1) Reduce internal temperatures to 36-38 degrees F.
  - i. If We Warm It, Will They Come?
  - j. Lake States HCP
    - 1) Covers; Indiana, northern long-eared, tri-colored, little brown bats.
    - 2) Necessary to obtain incidental take permit.
    - 3) Allows for continued forestry management practices while providing habitat conservation for federally listed species.
  - k. Lake States HCP Status
    - 1) HCP was approved in March 2023.

- 2) Committed bat conservation measures (within-stand retention, bat surveys and WNS mitigation).
- 3) Accepting applications from private landowners into the Landowner Enrollment Program.
- l. Questions:
  - 1) **Mr. Wright** noted he's had a bat house at his home for several years that is used by little brown bats consistently, and he finds the stability encouraging.
- m. **Chair Paquin** thanked Mr. DePue for the update.

2. Good Neighbor Authority Program Update (Cross)

- a. **Mr. Derek Cross**, the DNR's program specialist for the Good Neighbor Authority (GNA), provided an update on the GNA program. The program is a partnership between the states and the US Forest Service and allows Michigan to manage federal timberlands more effectively by collaborating with the state's three national forests: Ottawa (ONF), Hiawatha (HNF), and Huron-Manistee (HMNF).
- b. Program details:
  - 1) GNA began as a pilot project in Colorado in 2000.
  - 2) GNA was officially authorized through legislation in the 2014 Farm Bill, reauthorized with some changes in the 2018 Farm Bill, and carries on through continuing resolutions.
  - 3) Michigan signed their first agreement in 2015 which sunsetted in October 2025, and a second 10-year agreement in 2019. A new set of agreements is being worked on for a 20-year period.
  - 4) Timber operations began small in the 2016 and have grown significantly since.
  - 5) Additional legislation and funding have added to restoration activities (EXPLORE Act).
  - 6) Program expansion opportunities in the future.
- c. Implementing the GNA Program 2016-2025: According to a bar chart, the number of acres prepared in all three Michigan national forests started out at about 1,200 +/- acres in 2016 and has grown steadily to about 9,500 acres in 2025.
- d. Cords by forest and acres by forest: Production is measured in two ways; volume prepared in cords and acres prepared. Figures from a week ago indicate about 560,000 cords, with 216 timber sales sold through the GNA. The HMNF is about 53% of the program, ONF is 28% and HNF is 20% of the volume. For acres, the HMNF is about 45%, ONF is 31% and Hiawatha is 24%.
- e. How GNA benefits Michigan financially:
  - 1) Money generated from the sale of Michigan timber stays in Michigan versus going to Washington. It is held in trust by the DNR and the Governor.
  - 2) Expenditures by spending category: DNR operations (payroll, travel, paint, surveys, etc.), timber sale prep activities (boundary surveys, road improvements, etc.), cultivation and timber stand improvements (tree replantings), other restorations (mapping projects, stream and culvert surveys, and indirect costs (office space, etc.)).
  - 3) Money is reinvested in the local economy.
  - 4) Contracting and consulting.
  - 5) University collaboration.
  - 6) County road commission partnerships.

- f. Michigan DNR is ranked nationally as being one of the top producers of timber through the GNA program since 2021.
  - 1) 2025 work plan for GNA program was 9,529 acres spread across the three national forests.
  - 2) Planned timber increase across the GNA program starting in 2027.
- g. Program benefits:
  - 1) Improved relationships between agencies leading to co-management of Michigan's forest resources.
  - 2) Increased availability of forest products on the market.
  - 3) Sustainably managed forests for the future of Michigan, such as red pine.
  - 4) Access to DNR staff and tools to increase operational capacity when the Forest Service needs to reach management goals.
- h. Sharing resources within the program such as portable bridges and various mats to gain access to timber sale locations.
- i. Where does the money go? When money is raised through the sale of timber, it is held here in Michigan, then is returned to the landscape for habitat improvement projects, for example.
- j. Restoration efforts possible as a result of the GNA include:
  - 1) Habitat improvement projects are one of the largest outputs for restoration, such as a sharptail grouse habitat project.
  - 2) Provide funding to increase public safety patrols in high risk areas for ORVs, snowmobiles, boating safety, etc.
  - 3) Road work, such as repaving projects, roadside mowing for improved driver visibility.
  - 4) Surveys for timber production.
  - 5) Invasive species monitoring and control.
  - 6) Tree planting, such as maple and red pine.
  - 7) Timber stand improvements.
  - 8) Threatened and endangered species (sharptail grouse, butterflies, Kirtland's warbler).
- k. On the ground in the east UP, a long-term timber plan was developed in 2024:
  - 1) Timber output in the east UP increased in 2024.
  - 2) Increased staffing to meet timber increase.
  - 3) Restoration activities began increasing in 2024.
  - 4) Increased timber operations beginning in 2028.
  - 5) Increased opportunities for restoration projects with timber increases.
  - 6) Several active sales and restoration projects (7 open timber sales currently in the east zone and 5 open sales in the west zone).
- l. Questions:
  - 1) **Mr. Maida** commented that he works for the Bureau of Indian Affairs through the national forest service and has counted a lot of trees this past summer. In areas where there was sharptail grouse habitat improvement activity, not only is it good for the grouse, but there is a deer population there now that he hasn't seen in years. This activity is affecting the entire ecosystem in a positive way.
  - 2) **Secretary Dey** asked if there is anything on the current farm bill that would help implement this program past 2029. **Mr. Cross** noted that they are working on another agreement that would be for 20 years instead of 10 and it will hopefully

be signed before October 2026. There are 38 states involved in the GNA program, so it is here to stay. The current chief of the US Forest Service is actively promoting the GNA program. He further explained the positive future of the program.

- 3) **Lt. Zitnik** asked if the GNA is doing anything to enhance deer wintering complexes. **Mr. Cross** indicated not directly; however, as noted earlier, other habitat restoration projects indirectly help deer. He stated that many of the projects are led or directed by the forest service. He sees the future of the program including some of those types of projects, however.
- 4) **Mr. Lemmien** added he feels the GNA program is helping with summer habitat for the deer population by assisting the forest service with aspen acreage management.
- 5) **Lt. Zitnik** also asked if there have been any issues with timber theft where law enforcement could provide assistance. **Mr. Cross** stated that timber theft has been minimal, and they have a clear process in place for law enforcement involved if needed.

m. **Chair Paquin** thanked **Mr. Cross** for the valuable information presented.

3. Preliminary Overview of 2025 Deer Season (Lemmien)

- a. An adapted presentation from the last NRC meeting by Mr. Brent Rudolph was presented to the Council, with UP-specific slides added for the UP deer season. **Mr. Lemmien** stressed this information is preliminary (summarized through Dec. 4) with a full season comparison planned for March.
- b. The 2025 deer season showed a 0.8% increase in statewide tag sales (1.3 million total), with 600,000 hunters purchasing those tags, maintaining a stable hunting population over the last five years. The need still exists to bring in new hunters.
- c. The reported harvest data is presented as “reported harvest” and is subject to change as reports are updated. “Reported harvest” underestimates “actual harvest” due to non-compliance in hunter reporting (20-25%). Historic “harvest estimates” from the mail survey overestimate “actual harvest” with a 30% difference over the past three years. Michigan “reported harvest” and “harvest estimates” track as closely or better than comparable states.
- d. The use of the harvest reporting app was highlighted, which has improved efficiency in completing harvest reports. Completion initially took 4 minutes and is now taking about 2.5 minutes. He emphasized the need for continued messaging about the reporting requirement.
- e. Through Dec. 4, opening day of firearm season saw almost a 5% decrease in the U.P., with an overall 13% decrease in harvest for the entire firearm season compared to the 2024 season. Percentages for the northern and southern lower peninsula were also shown for comparison.
- f. On opening day, a little over 38,000 deer were reported harvested statewide with 77% of those being antlered deer. 8,700 antlerless deer were reported harvested statewide on opening day compared to just over 48,000 for the entire firearm season.
- g. A heat check map indicated township-level harvest changes, with more variation in the U.P. compared to other regions.

- h. Michigan's year-to-date reported harvest is close to last year's, showing a slight decrease, with Minnesota and Missouri showing significant increases. Other Midwest states harvest data shown included Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Ohio, and Wisconsin.
  - i. UP early archery season numbers are slightly higher than last year, but the firearm season harvest to date is below the 2024 season. Muzzleloader harvest in the UP was slightly higher than last year. All seasons combined (in the UP) to date, harvest is lagging just a bit behind last year at this time. Once seasons finish and final numbers are tabulated, it may be close to last year's overall harvest.
  - j. Historically, deer regulations are managed on a three-year cycle, although there have been changes the past two years. Field staff are currently meeting with the deer specialist and formulating their recommendations for the next three years. Last year, the NRC initiated a deer management initiative which was advisory to the NRC. This year, deer advisory teams were created by the DNR and are advisory to the Wildlife Division. The division will be working with the advisory teams to get their input. The division will then refine their recommendations around mid-February. The recommendations will be presented to the NRC for information at their April meeting, with tentative action taken by the NRC at their May meeting.
  - k. **Mr. Lemmien** indicated final season data and deer camp survey results will be presented at the next meeting.
  - l. Questions:
    - 1) **Vice Chair Gorniak** raised concerns about the decline in deer harvest rates, comparing historical harvest numbers to current ones by referencing a former DNR deer harvest graph that indicated 72,000 reported deer harvested across the UP in 2021 compared to 16,900 reported harvests in 2023. He expressed a desire to increase harvest rates.
  - m. **Chair Paquin** thanked Mr. Lemmien for the report.
4. Deer Advisory Team (DAT) General Overview (Zitnik)
- a. The newly formed Deer Advisory Team (DAT) is under the operation of the Wildlife Division, led by Mr. Brent Rudolph, the DNR Wildlife Division's deer, moose, and elk management specialist. **Lt. Zitnik**, a DNR staff member of the DAT, indicated the DAT derived from the original Deer Management Initiative that was created by the NRC and has since dissolved.
  - b. The DAT aims to prioritize deer management and habitat, with separate recommendations provided to the Wildlife Division for the UP and lower peninsula.
  - c. A general overview of the DAT's terms of reference (dated 8/2025) provided by Mr. Rudolph for this meeting was reviewed by **Lt. Zitnik**:
    - 1) Mission: Help ensure DNR deer management policy is based on the best available sound scientific evidence and informed by comprehensive, well informed stakeholder engagement.
    - 2) Core Values: Prioritize deer and deer habitat, rather than the needs and wants of individuals or organizations. We shall strive to maintain a conservation mindset, seeking to maximize the opportunity for the citizenry to utilize, enjoy, and hold overall positive views on deer and deer hunting well beyond our lifetime.

- 3) **Membership:** The Upper Peninsula and Lower Peninsula shall be composed of approximately equal (10 seats each) unaffiliated members and organizational representatives with an interest in deer, farming, and forest management, or other relevant backgrounds or stakeholder categories as specified by the DNR.
  - 4) **Member Duties:** Solicit the opinions of deer hunters from their area or their organization, synthesize comments, and provide them to the DAT. DAT members' input must include more than personal opinions and experiences. Members should contact hunters throughout the region and/or develop a network within their region/organization to get information.
  - d. **Lt. Zitnik** stated the group is working on what they can do for license packages and to further the deer herd as well as protecting deer wintering complex areas.
  - e. **Questions:**
    - 1) **Vice Chair Gorniak** suggested the DAT be a topic on the agenda at future meetings to allow for public input. **Mr. Kurkowski** noted only the DAT chair is authorized to present to other committees according to the DAT's terms of reference. **Ms. Dahlstrom** stated she will report this discussion back to Mr. Rudolph, DNR lead, for further review and noted DNR staff can present to the CACs when needed.
    - 2) **Mr. Pershinske** asked how many people serve on the DAT and noted the Michigan Farm Bureau was denied a position as they were told membership was full. **Lt. Zitnik** stated he believes it is currently at 10 members and is not aware of Mr. Rudolph's plans for future membership.
    - 3) **Secretary Dey** asked if there is a timeline for the DAT to provide input to the DNR. **Lt. Zitnik** indicated the goal is this spring and they are meeting regularly.
  - f. **Chair Paquin** thanked **Lt. Zitnik** for the update.
5. Status of Council Member Term Expirations/Absences (Dahlstrom)
    - a. The term expiration cycle affecting half of the council every two years was reviewed. The next round of terms will expire on December 31, 2026. Members have the option to be considered for an additional four-year term at that time. A selection process will take place in the late fall of 2026 to fill any open positions.
    - b. Attendance at meetings, as outlined in the bylaws, was discussed. Members were encouraged to attend regularly to ensure a quorum for conducting Council business.
  6. Reminder of Officer Selection at February 2026 Meeting (Paquin)

**Chair Paquin** reminded the Council that the annual officer election, held every year at the first meeting of the year, will take place at the January meeting.
  7. Additional Agenda Items Added by Council (Paquin)

**Chair Paquin** noted there were no additional items added to the agenda by the Council.

**IX. Committee Activity**

1. Fisheries (Vice Chair Gorniak): No items of business to report. If there are items of interest, please contact Vice Chair Gorniak.

2. Policy Impact (Hass): No items of business to report. If there are items of interest, please contact Mr. Hass. **Mr. Hass** stated items reviewed by the committee are presented in an abstract manner and are not of the opinions of any committee members.
3. Wildlife (Secretary Dey): No items of business to report. If there are items of interest, please contact Secretary Dey.

X. **Upcoming Meetings**

1. Approval of 2026 Meeting Dates & Locations
  - a. **Chair Paquin** asked the Council to review the proposed 2026 meeting schedule and asked if there were any issues with the dates/locations presented; none were brought forth. **Secretary Dey motioned to adopt the 2026 meeting schedule as presented; Vice Chair Gorniak supported the motion. After no discussion, Chair Paquin called for a vote on the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**
  - b. **Mr. Kovacs** noted NRC meetings will mostly be held on Wednesdays in 2026 versus the traditional Thursdays. As a result, the Joint UPCAC meeting in October will be held on a Tuesday.
2. Next EUPCAC Meeting: ~~Wednesday, February 25~~, 6:00pm, Virtual via Zoom. *\*NOTE: On February 12, the Council was notified that the next meeting date was changed to Thursday, March 12, 6:00pm, Virtual Via Zoom.*
3. Topic Suggestions for Upcoming Meetings
  - a. Topic suggestions for future meetings include an update on the AuTrain Dam, a capital project update across divisions, and an update on the wolf count survey and moose collaring projects. These topics will be added to agendas as presenters become available.
  - b. Any other topic suggestions can be sent to the Chair, Vice Chair, or Ms. Dahlstrom.

XI. **Public Comments (On Any Topic)**

**Chair Paquin** opened the floor for public comments on any topic; none were brought forth.

XII. **Closing Comments from Council**

**Chair Paquin** opened the floor for closing comments from the Council and DNR staff.

1. **Secretary Dey** noted his role as incoming president of Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC) and provided an update on their reorganization process. Despite these recent changes, the group's mission remains the same. If there are any questions, he would be happy to take them back to the organization.
2. **Vice Chair Gorniak** reported recent legislative action regarding the delisting of wolves which could return wolf management to Michigan soon. He has been in contact with Congressman Bergman's office on the status.

XIII. **Adjournment**

**Chair Paquin** thanked Council members for their participation and contributions to the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 8:05pm Eastern.