

Eastern Upper Peninsula Citizen Advisory Council (EUPCAC)
Meeting Minutes – APPROVED 4/15/25
Wednesday, February 19, 2025
6:00-8:30pm Eastern
Virtual via Zoom

Council Members Present

Jeff Cox	Bernie Hubbard	Joe Smith
Steve Dey, Secretary	Robert Liebermann	Tony Wright
Gary Gorniak, Vice Chair	Glenn Moll	
Tim Hass	Tom Paquin	

Council Members Excused/Absent

Tom Buckingham, Chair	Grant Dewitt	Mark Spencer
Ken Collier	Mark Maida	Julie Weist

Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Staff & Guests

Randy Claramunt, Fisheries Division Chief, Lansing
Eric Cowing, Parks & Recreation Division, Newberry
PJ Costa, Parks & Recreation Division-Trails Section, Newberry
Kristi Dahlstrom, CAC Assistant, Executive Division, Marquette
Lt. Skip Hagy, Law Enforcement Division-District 2, Newberry
Stacy Haughey, UP Field Deputy, Executive Division, Marquette
Darren Kramer, Fisheries Division, Newberry
Scott Lakosky, Forest Resources Division, Newberry
Karen Sexton, Wildlife Division, Escanaba
Simeon Wright, Forest Resources Division, Sault Ste. Marie

Welcome

Stacy Haughey welcomed everyone to the virtual meeting of the DNR’s Eastern UP Citizens’ Advisory Council. She reviewed virtual meeting etiquette and provided a brief overview of the Council and its advisory role as chartered by the DNR. She then recognized members of the public who registered to attend: Emma Woelkers from Sen. Peter’s office, Ashley Reitter from Schoolcraft Conservation District, John Kurkowski, Rich Maps, Dennis Patchakos, Dick Pershinske, and Brian Driscoll.

Call to Order

At 6:07pm Eastern, **Vice Chair Gary Gorniak** called the meeting to order in Chair Tom Buckingham’s absence. He welcomed members of the public as well as DNR staff and fellow Council members.

Introductions of Council Members/DNR Staff/Public Attendees

At **Vice Chair Gorniak’s** request, **Kristi Dahlstrom** conducted a roll call of attendees from the Zoom participant list and confirmed a quorum of members was present. A list of council members was also shown on screen. Four new members of the EUPCAC will officially meet everyone at the April in-person meeting; several of them were attending virtually this evening.

Adoption of Agenda

Vice Chair Gorniak asked the Council if there were any corrections or additions to the agenda; none were brought forth. **Secretary Dey** motioned to adopt the agenda as presented; **Mr. Hubbard** supported the motion. **After no discussion, Vice Chair Gorniak called for a vote on the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

Vice Chair Gorniak asked if there were any changes to the December 2, 2024, meeting minutes which were distributed to the Council via email previously for review. **Mr. Wright motioned to accept the minutes as submitted; Secretary Dey supported the motion. After no discussion, Vice Chair Gorniak called for a vote on the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

DNR Reports from Division Staff

Written staff reports were provided to Council members on February 12, 2025. The following brief updates were added.

1. *Stacy Haughey, UP Field Deputy*

- DNR Director Bowen, Chris Semrinec, DNR Legislative Liaison, and Scott Whitcomb, DNR Director of Public Lands were in the UP several days last weekend for legislative meetings and receptions held in conjunction with the UP 200. They also attended the UP Sportsman’s Alliance (UPSA) meeting on Saturday as well as a UP Whitetails of Marquette County meeting and banquet. Wildlife Division representatives Sara Thompson, Keith Kintigh, and Dave Lemmien also attended the Saturday meetings.
- The WUPCAC may be adjusting their meeting agendas to include more pertinent items near the beginning of meetings. The EUPCAC may wish to consider doing the same at future meetings.

2. *PJ Costa, Parks & Recreation Division-Eastern UP Trails*

- No additional updates to the report.

3. *Darren Kramer, Fisheries Division (Northern Lake Michigan Unit Manager)*

- No additional updates to the report.
- **Mr. Liebermann** asked about possible impacts to the sea lamprey control program and any other DNR fisheries programs due to recent cuts affecting US Fish and Wildlife Service personnel. **Mr. Kramer** responded he did not know the status of the sea lamprey program and noted concerns with any decrease in treatments. He added spring is the busiest season for fisheries programs and personnel and any impact will be seen soon.

4. *Scott Lakosky, Forest Resources Division*

- No additional updates to the report.
- **Mr. Liebermann** also asked if any DNR forestry programs will be affected by the recent cuts. **Mr. Lakosky** discussed the potential impact of federal grant cuts on forestry operations, noting the situation is being watched closely with the division considering possible shifts in personnel and/or workloads if it becomes necessary.

5. *Lt. Skip Hagy, Law Enforcement Division-District 2*

- The academy is in week seven with 17 recruits and is going well.
- **Vice Chair Gorniak** asked for contact information for Mackinac County officers to invite them to a sportsman’s club meeting and ask a few questions. **Lt. Hagy** will forward the information.
- **Mr. Liebermann** inquired about the new DNR Newberry office. **Lt. Hagy** stated staff moved in the last week of January and it has been open for business since. **Ms. Haughey** added an open house will be held mid-April and Council members will be invited. The April EUPCAC meeting will also be held in the building’s new conference room.

6. *Eric Cowing, Parks & Recreation Division*

- No additional updates to the report.

7. ***Karen Sexton, Wildlife Division***

- No additional updates to the report.
- **Vice Chair Gorniak** noted a reduction in funding for the UP Deer Habitat Improvement Partnership grants with only \$100,000 available this year. Last year, funding may have been reallocated from other areas to increase grant amounts. **Ms. Sexton** stated she will look into it and report back to him.
- **Mr. Wright** raised concerns about avian flu and its impact on wildlife, including merganser die-offs on Lake Michigan, and potential threats to birds like turkeys. He also mentioned a report citing thousands of marine animals in Argentina found dead and asked if any of the native Michigan mammals are threatened. **Ms. Sexton** indicated it is still acceptable to feed birds and provided recommendations for regular bird feeder cleaning to help deter spread. She states she wasn't aware of the Argentina die-off, but noted there have been a few cases of HPAI found in raccoon and fox in Michigan. The DNR's wildlife health team meets weekly to discuss HPAI and routine conversations with other states and agencies are occurring. She stressed the importance of surveillance and reporting efforts. If a bird is found dead for no visible reason, please contact the local DNR office.

Public Comments on Agenda Items Only

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

Annual Election of Officers

Vice Chair Gorniak noted the bylaws require the Council to have a yearly officer election, which traditionally occurs at the beginning of the year. He turned the floor over to **Ms. Haughey** to conduct the election; **Ms. Haughey** opened the floor for nominations for 2025:

1. ***Chair:*** **Mr. Gorniak** nominated Mr. Buckingham; **Mr. Gorniak** indicated **Mr. Buckingham** previously consented to a nomination if one was made in his absence. After three opportunities for nominations to be made, no additional nominations were brought forth. **Mr. Hass motioned to close the nominations; Mr. Dey supported the motion. After no discussion, Ms. Haughey called for a vote. The motion to close nominations passed unanimously.**
2. ***Vice Chair:*** **Mr. Cox** nominated Mr. Gorniak; **Mr. Gorniak** consented to the nomination. After three opportunities for nominations to be made, no additional nominations were brought forth. **Mr. Wright motioned to close the nominations; Mr. Hass supported the motion. After no discussion, Ms. Haughey called for a vote. The motion to close nominations passed unanimously.**
3. ***Secretary:*** **Mr. Gorniak** nominated Mr. Dey; **Mr. Dey** consented to the nomination. After three opportunities for nominations to be made, no additional nominations were brought forth. **Mr. Hass motioned to close the nominations; Mr. Cox supported the motion. After no discussion, Ms. Haughey called for a vote. The motion to close nominations passed unanimously.**
4. ***Vote:*** **Ms. Haughey** announced **Mr. Buckingham** has been nominated for Chair, **Mr. Gorniak** has been nominated for Vice Chair, and **Mr. Dey** has been nominated for Secretary. **Mr. Cox motioned to accept these three individuals for Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary as stated; Mr. Wright supported the motion. After no discussion, Ms. Haughey asked for an online poll vote to be initiated. The motion passed unanimously.**

Final Results: **For 2025, Mr. Buckingham, Mr. Gorniak, and Mr. Dey were elected and serve as Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary, respectively.**

Old Business

1. Wolf Management Update (Ms. Haughey)

- This is a standing agenda item at the request of the Council.
- **Ms. Haughey** informed the group that Rep. Tiffany (Wisconsin) and Rep. Boebert reintroduced legislation (titled the Pet and Livestock Protection Act) that would remove the gray wolf from the Endangered Species List, ensure that action is not subject to judicial review, and restore authority back to state lawmakers and state wildlife officials to control the gray wolf population. It is customary the DNR does not comment on pending legislation as it can change many times throughout the legislative process. The bill was discussed at the UPSA meeting on Feb. 15 by a representative from Congressman Bergman's office. The DNR will be monitoring this legislation and will keep the Council informed.

2. Follow-Up from December Meeting (Ms. Haughey)

- *Update:* Statewide mail-in surveys for deer season is still being done per **Mr. Lemmien**.
- *Completed:* Fall walleye results for Caribou Lake: **Mr. Kovacs** provided this information to **Vice Chair Gorniak** shortly after the December meeting.
- *Completed:* Listing of muskie stocked lakes: **Mr. Kovacs** provided this information to **Vice Chair Gorniak** shortly after the December meeting.

New Business

1. Eastern UP Forest Health/Invasive Species Update (Mr. Wright)

- **Simeon Wright** introduced himself to the Council as the DNR's forest pathologist, covering the entire state and based out of Sault Ste. Marie.
- He discussed forest health issues that are of high priority concerns in the eastern UP and the entire state, including hemlock wooly adelgid (HWA), balsam wooly adelgid (BWA), oak wilt, and heterobasidion root disease (HRD).
- The current extent of HWA in the lower peninsula and the high-risk areas of the east UP were explained. The northernmost known infestations are about 60 miles from the UP shoreline. There are about 176 million hemlock trees in the state, and most are still healthy. The current infestation rate is .15%.
- Management strategies are focused on the Lake Michigan shoreline where it is considered to be the highest risk areas for infestation. The DNR works with local CISMAS, national forests, and other entities to conduct survey and tree injections. In 2024, 80,000 trees were injected across several hundred acres, which keeps HWA somewhat contained to the infected areas.
- Signs of BWA are different from HWA. Symptoms of BWA include white "tufts" of material on the trunk and branches of fir trees vs. white "tufts" at the base of hemlock needles for HWA.
- It is not currently in the UP, but balsam fir is a very good host for this insect, and it is the most common tree species in the UP. Known locations in the lower peninsula were discussed. It is believed to have started with nursery stock from other areas of the US. MDARD has a quarantine that prevents movement.
- Oak wilt has not been found in the east UP where there isn't a large resource, but it is in the northern lower peninsula and is spreading in the west UP. Where oak wilt is present is prioritized due to the importance of the mast and the limited resources that exist. History, characteristics and what to look for were explained. A map of oak wilt pockets in the UP were shown and the importance of reporting resistant trees was highlighted.
- HRD is a fungal disease and is an issue for planted conifers, primarily planted red pine in Michigan. There is a presence in the east UP, east of Newberry and on the Hiawatha National Forest in Mackinac County near Moran.
- The importance of annual aerial surveys used to spot infected areas was highlighted. Spruce budworm (a native insect) and spongy moth (formerly called gypsy moth) are frequently seen.

- Jack pine budworm is the most common native insect other than spruce budworm that was mapped in the last year through aerial surveys, primarily in Luce and Schoolcraft Counties. Extensive defoliation occurs for 3-4 years before subsiding and in 2025, it should start to slow down.
- Emerald ash borer has caused a lot of mortality in the east UP's ash trees. The DNR is very interested in trees surviving mortality, such as ash trees, beech trees surviving beech bark disease, or elms surviving Dutch elm disease. If these trees are found surviving, please report it on the TreeSnap app or by contacting DNR staff directly (Simeon Wright-Sault Ste. Marie or Pete Holodnick-Marquette).
- Michigan's 2024 Forest Health Highlights, a summary of forest health in the state, activities of the DNR and partners, along with research being done, will be available soon at this link: www.michigan.gov/foresthealth.
- **Vice Chair Gorniak** asked if the recent few weeks of below zero temps in the UP had an effect on HWA or BWA. **Mr. Wright** indicated that a sustained temp of 20 below zero is what's needed to help deter infection. The amount of snowfall can also insulate tree branches from these cold temps, allowing the infection to continue unfortunately.
- **Vice Chair Gorniak** stated the Straits Area Sportsman's Club conducts a lot of habitat work, including the planting of hundreds of oak trees, which was prior to hearing about oak wilt. He asked how the club can continue to help with plantings despite all the diseases. **Mr. Wright** mentioned diversifying the planting by spreading them out amongst other tree species and not creating a dominate area with more than 50% oak would work best. Infections have big impacts in areas where the majority of the trees are oak, with the disease moving very effectively through the root systems from tree to tree. The fungus has a harder time moving through the stand if oak is not the dominate species. He suggested planting white oak may be beneficial as it's much less vulnerable to oak wilt.
- **Ms. Haughey** asked how forest health issues are shared with loggers, tree trimming companies, etc. **Mr. Wright** replied there are a variety of trainings, etc.; however, if anyone receives questions on these issues, he welcomes them to contact him or Mr. Holodnick directly.

2. Fisheries Regulation Proposals (Mr. Kramer)

- Walleye regulation proposals for Milakokia Lake and Big Manistique Lake in the east UP were presented to the Council to gain feedback. The Fisheries Division solicits a wide range of public feedback from a diverse group of anglers such as lake associations, sportsmen's groups, area meetings, the UPCACs, etc.
- DNR Inland Walleye Management Plan (2021)
 - The six goals of the DNR's inland walleye management plan were reviewed.
- Fisheries Order Change Process
 - The Natural Resources Commission (NRC) has the sole authority to set/change fish and game regulations in Michigan.
 - The Fisheries Division makes fisheries order change recommendations to the NRC that will meet the division's goals as well as the those for anglers. Eight steps in the process along with the timeline for change orders were reviewed: 1) call for recommendations; 2) preparation of draft fish orders (working with Law Enforcement Division); 3) external review (public feedback through meetings, etc.); 4) regulations review committee; 5) Fisheries Division approval; 6) final drafts for NRC review and approval; 7) DNR approval; 8) effective dates and fishing guide.
- Some Fisheries are Changing
 - There are concerns about walleye recruitment and the impact of environmental changes on walleye populations in the Upper Midwest.
 - Northern Wisconsin is experiencing walleye recruitment declines in several lakes and reduced its inland lake daily bag limit.
 - The DNR's northern Lake Michigan management unit is also experiencing a variety of changes to its walleye populations and is the reason for the need to build resiliency now through these walleye regulation proposals.

– A glimpse of the variety of studies and articles about climate and environmental changes affecting walleye habitat in Wisconsin were shown.

▪ *Tribal Fishery*

- Milakokia and Big Manistique Lakes fall within the 1836 Treaty area in which the DNR co-manages the fishery with Tribal governments.
- Tribal spearing is regulated through a quota and permit system based on biological data collection and analyses. This is included in the 2007 consent decree (of the 1836 Treaty) and is available online to read if desired. Monitoring, reporting and data sharing between the DNR and the Tribes are key aspects to successful management.
- Relatively low harvest of walleye through the Tribal spear fishery takes place; statistics were shown.

▪ *Proposed Protective Slot Limits (PSL) for Walleye Management*

- The goal is to preserve females in the population to ensure more spawning opportunities under varying environmental conditions. PSLs can improve the size structure of the walleye population and increase the chance of catching a large walleye. It can also increase angler catch rates due to recycling walleye within the slot limit.

▪ *Toolbox: Regulations*

- The proposed PSL would be a minimum size limit (MSL) of 15 inches, 18-23 inch PSL, and a daily possession of three: three walleye between 15-18 inches or two walleye between 15-18 inches and one walleye over 23 inches. Walleye between 18 and 23 inches would be protected from harvest.
- A survey of anglers showed that the existing statewide regulation was the most preferred, followed by the protected slot limit second, and catch and release was the least preferred.

▪ *Geographic Concerns and Public Meetings*

- Regional UP fish biologists discussed concerns in three core geographic areas: Schoolcraft County (Milakokia and Big Manistique Lakes), Dickinson & Iron Counties (Lakes Emily, Mary, Antoine, Ottawa, and Hagerman, Stanley and Winslow Lakes), and Gogebic County (Lake Gogebic). Public meetings to gain feedback from anglers have been held in the two west UP areas, and one will be held in the east UP on February 26 at 6pm at the Curtis community building.
- The PSL is not being proposed for all walleye waters in the Upper Peninsula but for a small subset of lakes (listed above) based on feedback and data.
- The decision to move forward with the proposals will depend on public input and comments from meetings and online feedback. Current feedback for three of the lakes in Dickinson & Iron Counties may result in removal from the PSL proposal.

▪ *Data and Growth Rates*

- The importance of having sufficient data to make decisions, particularly regarding growth rates of walleyes was emphasized.
- Milakokia and Big Manistique Lakes are highlighted for their good growth rates and natural reproduction.
- The proposed PSL is an experimental regulation that will be evaluated over 10 years, with population estimates conducted 5 years after it goes into effect for these lakes. Both Big Manistique and Milakokia Lakes had population estimates done in 2023 and 2024, respectively.
- Annual fall surveys will monitor recruitment and natural reproduction if the PSL is implemented.

▪ *Growth & Catch Rates – Big Manistique Lake*

- Data on growth rates show that walleyes are generally healthy, growing at a mean average rate up to age 10 with older year classes showing slower growth.
- Historical age-0 walleye catch rates from fall recruitment surveys 1992-2023 with peaks and valleys were shown. Catch rates has been on the decline since 2018. This lake has had annual surveys since the early 90s creating the best survey data available.
- Concerns about year class suppression and environmental variability were discussed.

- Data on the number of males, females, and unknowns caught in the 2023 walleye population estimates in relation to regulation proposals were explained.
- The proposed PSL would protect 40% of the population, focusing on maintaining natural recruitment and increasing the size structure of the population. The PSL would preserve females from harvest, allowing them to spawn multiple times and maintain the walleye population.
- The overall goal is to maintain increased natural recruitment and address concerns about environmental changes and invasive species.
- *Growth & Catch Rates – Milakokia Lake*
 - Growth rate data show walleyes have a slightly slower growth compared to Big Manistique Lake.
 - Recruitment data is not as plentiful for this lake. The DNR’s Tribal Coordination Unit will be helping to build an annual data set with fall surveys.
 - With the proposed PSL, roughly a quarter of walleye will be protected with the goal to maintain increased natural recruitment and perhaps increase size structure a bit with this population.
- *Angler Perceptions and Public Feedback*
 - Angler acceptance and law enforcement support is key for the PSL to be effective. A Tribal partnership is also important.
 - Concerns about angler perceptions and the potential for anglers to move to other lakes if the PSL is not accepted were raised.
 - Other items to consider include evaluations (metrics), possible increased predation on forage, and Minnesota and Wisconsin’s experiences.
 - The importance of evaluating the PSL was emphasized. Gathering feedback from anglers through public meetings or written feedback (a link is available in the recent press release) is extremely important to the division.
- *Questions*
 - **Vice Chair Gorniak** feels the PSLs between 15-18 inches are too narrow. **Mr. Kramer** noted this same comment has been made and is it a point well taken. The goal for the proposed PSL is to accommodate a suite of lakes versus individual management, while also considering a changing environment, aquatic invasive species, etc., and provide anglers the opportunity to harvest fish.
 - **Secretary Dey** asked if there is a concern that more males were caught than females in the fall recruitment survey. **Mr. Kramer** stated males tend to be caught more often due to their behavior during spawning, with females being more ephemeral, so it is very common to catch more males during the fall surveys.

3. Eastern UP Snowmobile Trail Update (Mr. Costa)

- An update on snowmobile trail conditions in the east UP was provided, noting substantial snowfall and high traffic in the northern areas.
- Some trails were struggling with lack of freezing wetlands early in the season and were closed, but most are now being kept up with regular grooming and good snow levels. A trail north of St. Ignace is closed due to safety reasons resulting from logging on federal land. A reroute plan is in the works for next year. Another trail is closed by Paradise and will remain so until funding can be secured to repair an expensive bridge.
- A TASA (Tahquamenon Area Snowmobile Assn) groomer burnt up mid-February on trail 45 about 3 miles northeast of the Tahquamenon River bridge. Backup machines will be used until a replacement can be found. Other clubs will step in to help groom the trails.
- Funding may be running low for the 4-5 eastern UP clubs who are grooming trails, sometimes twice a day, due to the increased traffic. Transferring funding earmarked for clubs in the southern UP who didn’t groom as much this year may be an option.

- A grooming workshop by MiSORVA is scheduled for March 4-6 at Kewadin Casino in Sault Ste. Marie to provide training and resources for grooming clubs along with a chance to view the latest grooming equipment on the market.
- Concerns about snowmobile accidents and deaths in the east UP (four to date) due to the increased activity were discussed. A regional trauma coordinator for the state indicated a significant increase in snowmobile injuries being reported at regional UP hospitals. With snow occurring in the northern lower peninsula, it should spread snowmobile traffic out more.
- State park rangers are now helping trail rangers manage 13 motorized clubs and conduct trail inspections in the east UP. The transition of this role to the Parks and Recreation Division was recently completed and is going well.
- After a significant drop in trail sticker sales last year, sales are up almost 50% this year, which is falling in line with 2023 and better than 2021 and 2022.
- **Mr. Paquin** asked why the trail coming into St. Ignace around Chain Lake hasn't been groomed this winter. **Mr. Costa** will check into this and report back.

4. Winter Boating Access Site Partnership (Ms. Haughey)

- A continued partnership to improve ice fishing access sites, with over 25 hot spot sites consistently maintained, was highlighted. Ice anglers utilize trailers with ORVs or snowmobiles to navigate on frozen lakes during the winter and plowed lots allow for adequate and safe parking.
- There is no funding source tied to keeping access sites plowed during the winter months. Boating access sites are funded by the Michigan State Waterways Fund, a restricted fund derived primarily from boat registration fees and a portion of Michigan's gas tax that supports the construction, motorized operation and maintenance of public recreational boating facilities. Frozen use is not an allowable expense under that funding model.
- The partnership involves multiple DNR divisions, including parks and fisheries, local governments and road commissions, fishing groups, bait shops and resort owners. The partners have been crucial in maintaining these sites and are extremely appreciated by the ice angling community. Wisconsin and Minnesota utilize a similar partnership system. Anyone wishing to become a partner can contact **Ms. Haughey** or **Mr. Cowing**.
- **Vice Chair Gorniak** mentioned the Straits Area Sportsman's Club plows Brevort Lake access site all winter for the public to utilize. It was clarified this was not a state access site but a forest service access site. **Secretary Dey** noted the DNR's public access site at Brevort Lake is continually congested and parking overflows on Dukes Road. **Mr. Cowing** indicated it is not currently a plowed access site in the winter. If a sportsman's club or other entity be interested in keeping it plowed, please contact him to complete an agreement.

5. Committee Interest (Ms. Haughey)

- The Council reviewed committee structures, including fisheries, policy impact, wildlife, forestry/invasive species, and recreation/trails.
- The importance of participation was emphasized, and Council members were encouraged to join any of the committees at any time based on interests. New members will be informed at the time they are appointed.

6. Additional Agenda Items Added by Council

- There were no additional items added to the agenda by the Council.

Committee Activity

1. Fisheries (Vice Chair Gorniak)

- The committee has not had a need to meet since the last Council meeting.

- Cormorant funding for inland lakes is still an issue.

2. Policy Impact (Mr. Hass)

- The committee has not had a need to meet since the last Council meeting.

3. Wildlife (Secretary Dey)

- The committee has not had a need to meet since the last Council meeting.
- **Secretary Dey** mentioned he is preparing a resolution regarding a format for having a wolf hunting and trapping season to discuss at a future wildlife committee meeting.

4. Other Committee Activity: None.

Next Meeting

1. Next EUPCAC Meeting

- **Vice Chair Gorniak** noted the next Council meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 15 in person, beginning at 6:00pm Eastern at the DNR's new Newberry Customer Service Center conference room.

2. Topic Suggestions for Next Meeting

- **Vice Chair Gorniak** asked Council members to forward any topic suggestions for upcoming agendas to Chair Buckingham, Ms. Haughey or Ms. Dahlstrom.

Public Comments (On Any Topic)

Vice Chair Gorniak opened the floor for public comments on any topic.

1. Ashley Reitter, Schoolcraft Conservation District, announced the beginnings of the Central UP Birding Trail, inviting collaboration and participation from local partners that currently includes conservation districts, MSU Extension and the Laughing Whitefish Birding Alliance. The vision is to create a driving/hiking birding trail that covers hot spots in Alger, Schoolcraft, Marquette, Delta, Menominee, and Dickinson counties. The trail would be a replica of the shore-to-shore birding trail in the east UP. A kickoff meeting will be held on March 25 at the Peter White Library in Marquette from 2-5pm; a virtual component will be available. Discussion will center around possible sites, prospective partners, connections and permissions needed, etc. She encouraged anyone interested, especially those with expertise and location suggestions, to attend. **Vice Chair Gorniak** asked if this is part of the North Country Trail. Ms. Reitter stated birding trails are a collection of sites and is not the creation of a new trail. For example, a portion of the North Country Trail, could be one of the stops on the birding trail.

Closing Comments from Council

Vice Chair Gorniak opened the floor for closing comments from the Council and DNR staff.

1. **Vice Chair Gorniak** indicated discussion held at the UPSA meeting on Feb. 15 gave the indication that wolves would be delisted sometime this year. He noted a representative from Congressman Jack Bergman's office was involved in the discussion. He also stated DNR Director Bowen who was present was asked how long it would take to put together a hunting and trapping season once wolves were delisted, and the Director replied nine months. Five of the six UP legislators attended the UPSA meeting and seemed unified in working together on this issue.
2. **Mr. Smith** suggested licensed vendors be allowed to sell \$2 fishing licenses to kids as a means to raise additional funding for fisheries since the federal government would reimburse the DNR \$10 for every \$2 license

sold. He also asked if the DNR still has a burn policy. **Fisheries Chief Claramunt** thanked **Mr. Smith** for the suggestion. He noted there currently is a \$2 youth license available, although it is voluntary. There are about 3,500 youth licenses purchased each year, and because it is voluntary, it lacks high participation rates. He mentioned the division is having discussions on a variety of funding models that could be utilized. Examples from other states include lowering the age at which a regular license is required or having a youth license tied to keeping a bag limit of fish. **Mr. Lakosky** addressed the burn policy question, noting the active burn permit system allows the public to call a toll-free number or access the website (www.michigan.gov/burnpermit) to find out if burning is allowed in a specific area/township on any certain day.

Adjournment

Vice Chair Gorniak thanked everyone for attending the meeting. Attendees were reminded of the importance of public input and collaboration in managing natural resources. The meeting adjourned at 8:30pm Eastern.