

Eastern Upper Peninsula Citizen Advisory Council (EUPCAC)

APPROVED* Meeting Minutes *APPROVED

Tuesday, June 13, 2023

6:00-8:30pm Eastern

Lake Superior State University-Cisler Center Superior Ballroom, Sault Ste. Marie

Chair: Tom Buckingham Vice-Chair: Gary Gorniak Secretary: Jack Thomas

Council Members Present

Tom Buckingham

Ken Collier

Steve Dey

Gary Gorniak

Tim Hass

Bernie Hubbard

Robert Liebermann

David Lieble

Glenn Moll

Jack Thomas

Council Members Excused/Absent

Grant Dewitt

Al Garavaglia

Travis Kangas

Mark Maida

Tom Paquin

Joe Smith

Mark Spencer

Julie Weist

Tony Wright

Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Staff Liaisons & Guests

PJ Costa, Parks & Recreation Division-Eastern UP Trails, Newberry

Eric Cowing, Parks & Recreation Division, Newberry

Kristi Dahlstrom, Executive Division, Marquette

Lt. Skip Hagy, Law Enforcement Division, Newberry

Stacy Haughey, UP Field Deputy, Executive Division, Marquette

Dave Lemmien, Wildlife Division, Sault Ste. Marie

Call to Order/Roll Call

The Eastern UP Citizens' Advisory Council meeting was called to order at 6:02pm by **Chair Tom Buckingham**. He welcomed everyone in attendance.

Adoption of Agenda

Chair Buckingham asked the Council if there were any corrections or additions to the agenda; none were brought forth. **Mr. Hass motioned to adopt the agenda as presented; Mr. Collier supported the motion. Chair Buckingham called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.**

Introductions of Council Members/DNR Staff/Public Attendees

Chair Buckingham asked the Council, DNR staff and members of the public to introduce themselves.

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

Chair Buckingham asked if there were any further changes to the April 26, 2023 meeting minutes which were distributed to the Council via email for review. **Mr. Hass motioned to accept the minutes as submitted; Mr. Hubbard supported the motion. Chair Buckingham called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.**

Chair Comments

Chair Buckingham indicated he is looking forward to the lifting of the fire bans due to the recent rains which were much needed.

Public Comments on Agenda Items

Chair Buckingham opened the floor for public comments on agenda items only; none were brought forth.

DNR Reports from Division Staff

Written staff reports were provided via email to Council members on June 6, 2023. The following were verbal additions to those reports:

1. Stacy Haughey, UP Field Deputy

- Due to the state's current fire danger levels, fire resource staff have been working 45 days straight. **Ms. Haughey** commended their efforts and thanked them for working diligently to protect us all. Crews from other states have also come in to help.
- The picking up of roadkill has been a recent issue in some counties and many may have seen it in the news. Some road commissions are excellent partners and others have been having the public call the DNR office. Several DNR staff have been working with all partners involved to clearly communicate what the parameters are and dispel misconceptions and misinformation. A 1997 task force report indicating the process that key entities agreed upon was referenced. It is a county road commission's decision whether to pick up roadkill on county roads and on state trunklines it is their responsibility to pick up roadkill. If there are any questions, please contact **Ms. Haughey**.
- **Secretary Thomas** asked what the process is if someone comes upon a roadkill and wishes to pick it up. **Ms. Haughey** indicated if a person wishes to take roadkill for consumption, then a permit from any peace officer must be obtained. If a person wishes to drag the roadkill off to the side of the road, no permit is needed.
- **Vice Chair Gorniak** stated some people may pick up roadkill for coyote hunting. **Lt. Hagy** indicated a salvage permit is legally needed in those cases.

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

- Two bids were awarded for two of the three bridges on Trail 8. The third bid came in high, so additional funding for the third bridge will be needed before that project moves ahead.
- The Bissell Creek project hasn't started yet, although the report indicates it has.
- The Millecoquins project involved a significant price change; creative solutions are being looked into before it can begin.

3. Dave Lemmien, Wildlife Division

- A wildlife technician from the Baraga office recently retired after 46 years with the DNR. This is a loss of great institutional knowledge, and it is hoped that the position will be filled in the near future.
- A surrogate sow project, in which orphaned cubs are matched up with a sow, was explained. The goal is to have 4-6 sows collared in the UP; currently there are 4.
- Cameras are being placed throughout Drummond Island to continue a wildlife study, which was also done last year. Bears are being collared there to study their movement on the island.
- Wildlife biologist Ms. Kristie Sitar and wildlife technician Ms. Jayne Moohr from the Newberry office participated in a MUCC tree planting project, planting 100 trees total.
- Questions:

- **Vice Chair Gorniak** asked about the moose survey and a press release that didn't state why the moose population is decreasing.
- **Mr. Lemmien** referred to the moose survey presentation that was provided at the June NRC Meeting by Mr. Chad Stewart: Moose Survey Results.
- *Current Moose Distribution Map*: The moose population in the eastern UP is from the relocated moose from Isle Royale which helped the resident population in that area.
- *Aerial Survey/Core Moose Range Estimates*: The survey is of the moose population on the western UP range. For 2023, 212 moose were observed, which after going through the research model, equates to an estimate of 426 moose on the range.
- *Core Population Trends*: Based on population trends in the central and western UP range, there is less than a 1% growth. Reasons can include: 1) the UP is on the southern part of the moose range and can affect their health and reproduction; moose are built for cold weather and deep snow, 2) ticks load up on moose and has a profound effect on reproduction; and 3) brainworm and liver flukes impacts the moose population.
- *Reproduction*: There is no migration from the west and north, which indicates the population currently on the UP range has been here since the 1980s. The eastern UP range population has been there a little longer. Genetics play a factor in the ability to reproduce, and the percentage of twins are dropping. Roadkill of a bull moose also plays a role in reproduction.
- **Vice Chair Gorniak** asked if a better way to count moose would be thermal imaging. **Mr. Lemmien** indicated research staff are looking into other methods. Conducting the aerial survey in the winter does have a large safety risk due to weather conditions. **Vice Chair Gorniak** feels predators are a big factor in the decrease in the growth rate of the population.
- **Mr. Dey** asked if the research model used has ever been updated. **Mr. Lemmien** stated he doesn't know about the moose survey but for other surveys, they are constantly updated and adjusted. **Ms. Haughey** indicated the researcher is a shared position with NMU and is new to the position which brings in new knowledge and new perspectives.

4. Lt. Skip Haagy, Law Enforcement Division

- Backgrounds are being worked on for additional pre-certified officers, and it is hoped they can be in service in September. A few officers received promotions creating vacancies.
- The importance of not feeding bears was stressed, especially in residential areas.

5. Eric Cowing, Parks & Recreation Division

- Staff are busy with the start of construction projects in the Eastern UP. Half of Straits State Park is closed this year for construction and Mackinac Island harbor is still closed due to construction.
- **Chair Buckingham** asked about this year's reservation numbers. **Mr. Cowing** indicated they aren't as high as the covid year, but they are 2% higher than pre-covid.

Annual Election of Officers

Chair Buckingham indicated the annual officer elections were deferred upon agreement from the Council at the last meeting in April (when he was not present). He turned the floor over to Ms. Haughey to conduct the election. **Ms. Haughey** opened the floor for nominations for 2023:

1. ***Chairman:*** **Mr. Thomas** nominated Mr. Buckingham; **Mr. Buckingham** consented to the nomination. After three more opportunities, no additional nominations were brought forth. **Mr. Hass made a motion to close the nominations; Mr. Thomas supported the motion. No discussion. A vote was held. The motion passed unanimously.**
2. ***Vice Chairman:*** **Mr. Hubbard** nominated Mr. Gorniak; **Mr. Gorniak** consented to the nomination. After three more opportunities, no additional nominations were brought forth. **Mr. Hass motioned to close the nominations; Mr. Buckingham supported the motion. No discussion. A vote was held. The motion passed unanimously.**
3. ***Secretary:*** **Mr. Collier** nominated Mr. Thomas; **Mr. Thomas** consented to the nomination. After three more opportunities, no additional nominations were brought forth. **Mr. Hass motioned to close the nominations; Mr. Collier supported the motion. No discussion. A vote was held. The motion passed unanimously.**
4. ***Vote:*** **Ms. Haughey** declared Mr. Buckingham has been nominated for Chair, Mr. Gorniak has been nominated for Vice Chair, and Mr. Thomas has been nominated for Secretary. She asked for a motion to accept these individuals as officers. **Mr. Hass motioned to accept these three individuals as officers as noted; Mr. Hubbard supported the motion. No discussion. A vote was held. The motion passed unanimously.**
5. ***Final Results:*** **For 2023, Mr. Buckingham, Mr. Gorniak, and Mr. Thomas will serve as Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary, respectively.**

Old Business

1. ***Wolf Management Update (Ms. Haughey)***
 - **Ms. Haughey** noted the EUPCAC Wildlife Committee had requested Mr. Tyler Petroelje attend the meeting to talk about the 2022 wolf track survey. However, Mr. Petroelje provide a written update as he was unable to attend this evening due to being afield for an ongoing research project.
 - From **Mr. Petroelje:** A winter wolf track survey for the UP was not completed this past winter. Rather, the last survey was in early 2022 and the next survey will be held in the winter of 2024. An ongoing study is being conducted to compare two alternative methods (a UP-wide camera survey and an occupancy track survey) to estimate wolf abundance in the UP, though that study just began last year, and preliminary results are not yet available. Once preliminary data is available, Mr. Petroelje will be happy to attend an EUPCAC to give a presentation on the new methods being tested and how that compares to the traditional minimum count winter track survey. All 3 methods will be conducted during 2024 for comparison.
 - Questions:
 - **Chair Buckingham** asked if game cameras with a date stamp are used by the DNR. He noted many hunters don't reset the date and times. **Mr. Lemmien** explained the survey in which cameras are placed at specific locations and are date and time stamped. He indicated this information is critical for the research project and those details are very important.
 - **Vice Chair Gorniak** stated there are areas in the eastern UP where the wolf density is one wolf per square mile. Residents on Neebish Island are especially concerned with their high wolf density of 16-17 wolves. **Ms. Haughey** asked if anyone on the island has reached out to the DNR; **Vice Chair Gorniak** stated he didn't think so. **Ms. Haughey** noted it is very important to stay in communication with DNR staff if there are any wolf interactions.

- **Mr. Dey** stated NRC Chair Baird has made mention the NRC will be working on a decision tree with the DNR. He asked if the writers of the decision tree would be reaching out to user groups for input prior to presenting the decision tree at the October NRC meeting. **Ms. Haughey** indicated he should reach out to the NRC to ask that question as she is not aware of what their process will be.

New Business

1. Marquette County Shooting Range Update (Ms. Haughey)

- An update on two new shooting ranges in the UP was provided and pictures were shown.
- *Indoor range and meeting space outside of the Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park:* This range is a partnership with Lake Superior Sportsman’s Club. Most of the interior is complete and the exterior will be complete soon. The range equipment is installed, and all lanes are ADA compliant. Project completion is anticipated in June with a public opening scheduled for July/August.
- *Marquette County Range Progress:* The contractor is currently building structures for the shooters as well as the baffles on-site. The site has been cleared and some tree debris has been stockpiled for the DNR and National Guard to use in blocking off access to the unauthorized Cliffs/Sands Township site that has been used for years. The National Guard is a partner in the project for training purposes. Earthwork for berm construction will begin soon. Anticipated completion will be in late July or early August, and a public opening will be held in September to coincide with a Conservation Officer who was killed in the line of duty many years ago in the same month. The range will be named after him.

2. Proposed Michigamme Highlands Forest Legacy Project (Ms. Haughey)

- The DNR, in collaboration with Lyme Timber, has been having engagement meetings with Baraga, Iron and Marquette County officials and stakeholders regarding a proposed Forest Legacy Program project that would place approximately 73,000 acres across these combined counties into a permanent working forest conservation easement. UP legislators and affected township officials have also been informed.
- This is a federal grant the DNR has applied for, and it looks promising. It is a working forest conservation easement in perpetuity that will provide both increased habitat and access.
- Questions:
 - **Secretary Thomas** asked if the state was looking into buying Mt. Arvon. **Ms. Haughey** indicated this project would be protected through a conservation easement which would keep it open to trail, hunting and fishing access without purchasing more state land in these counties. She noted that there are still some residual effects of the former land cap bill as well. She indicated Ms. Kerry Heckman is the lead on the project and she may be able to speak to the Council at a future meeting about the project. The Keweenaw land purchase by The Land Conservancy was also mentioned.
 - **Mr. Liebermann** asked what the purchase price is for the forest legacy project. **Ms. Haughey** stated Lyme Timber will be paid through the grant funding source and is not aware of the price.

3. Status of Proposed Deer Regulations to the NRC (Mr. Lemmien/Ms. Haughey)

- **Ms. Haughey** reviewed the timeline of the proposed deer regulations between April to June, indicating when presentations about the proposed regulations were provided and when public comment was made available at various meetings and through press releases. She

also reviewed the details of the action at the June Natural Resources Commission (NRC) meeting.

- At the **June 8th NRC meeting, Wildlife Conservation Order #7 of 2023** was up for action (WCO #7 of 2023 was presented for information at the May NRC Meeting). The order regulates white-tailed deer hunting in Michigan and has been an ongoing order in front of the commission each year.
- In total, 9 commissioner amendments were offered to the proposed deer regulations and 28 members of the public provided testimony.
- Commissioners made it clear that this is not the end of discussions involving broad deer regulations, with a commitment to continue the discussion off the regulatory cycle.
- Commissioners passed WCO #7 with **amendments 6 and 7 (specific to the Upper Peninsula)** on a 5-1 vote. Votes on each individual amendment are below:
 - Amendment No. 1 – Commissioner Walters, *amendment dies for lack of a second.*
 - Antlerless only harvest during the Liberty and Independence Hunt
 - Amendment No. 2 – Commissioner Walters *amendment dies for lack of a second.*
 - Antlered or antlerless deer on a single deer license.
 - Amendment No. 3 – Commissioner Walters (*Withdrawn*)
 - Amendment No. 4 – Commissioner Walters *amendment dies for lack of a second.*
 - Changing opening day dates for all seasons to begin on a Saturday.
 - Amendment No. 5A – Commissioner Walters *fails 4-2 after a Commissioner Nyberg amendment to exempt age 70+ hunters from APRs.*
 - Antler point restrictions, core Tb and CWD zone.
 - Amendment No. 5B – Commissioner Walters *amendment dies for lack of a second.*
 - Antler point restrictions.
 - Amendment No. 5C – Commissioner Walters *fails 5-1.*
 - Antler point restrictions, DMUs 022, 055, 121, 122, 155, and 255.
 - Amendment No. 5D – Commissioner Walters *amendment dies for lack of a second.*
 - Antler point restrictions, Upper Peninsula.
 - Amendment No. 6 – Commissioner Anthony **passes 5-1.**
 - **Retain existing antlerless structure in the Upper Peninsula.**
 - Amendment No. 7 – Commissioner Anthony **passes 5-1.**
 - **Retain existing restrictions on crossbows in the Upper Peninsula.**
- Questions:
 - A member of the public asked why the UP CWD Zone requirements were lifted. **Ms. Haughey** indicated only one CWD case was found in the UP in 2019. No other cases have been reported to date.
 - **Mr. Lemmien** stated the DNR will still monitor and ask for samples in areas along the Wisconsin border, since CWD is still present in Wisconsin. **Ms. Haughey** added there has been a reduction of samples provided in that area, and it's important to still receive them.

4. DNR Staffing Updates (Ms. Haughey)

- **Ms. Haughey** reviewed several staff updates within the DNR. She noted a replacement for the Director has not yet been named. Some positions will permanently filled once a new Director is in place.
- DNR Executive Staff: Shannon Lott is currently Acting Director. Scott Whitcomb is currently Acting Deputy Director. Sara Thompson is Acting Wildlife Division Chief until September.

Amy DeRosier is Acting Director for the Office of Public Lands. Randy Claramunt began as the new Fisheries Division Chief on April 1. Jim Dexter, Fisheries Division Chief, retired on April 28. Trevor VanDyke, Legislative Director, left state service last week to take a position with the Michigan Supreme Court.

- Eastern UP Local Staff: Chris Cox promoted to Forest Fire Officer Supervisor in Newberry on April 30. Michelle Douglas, former secretary at Newberry, transferred to Forest Resources Division in Marquette. Rebecca Randazzo began as a Secretary at the Sault Ste. Marie office several months ago. She fills the role previously held by Mary Wollan who retired. Troy Sumner is the Parks & Recreation Division Supervisor at the Newberry Field Office beginning last October.

5. Additional Agenda Items Added by Council: No additional items were added.

Committee Activity

1. Fisheries Committee (Vice Chair Gorniak)

- **Vice Chair Gorniak** stated the committee did not meet. He spoke with **Ms. Haughey** about cormorants earlier this month. He also noted the Straits Area Fishing Club stocked 1,000 rainbow with an average length of 15 inches in Castle Rock Pond in St. Ignace for a kids' fishing day. There are still lots of fish available to be caught.

2. Wildlife Committee (Mr. Dey)

- **Mr. Dey** indicated the committee met on May 18th and discussed several topics including wolves, the moose count, and the deer population. The committee has forwarded requests to have DNR researcher Tyler Petroelje and DNR deer specialist Chad Stewart attend a Council meeting to discuss the 2022 winter wolf survey and the eastern UP deer population, respectively.

3. Other Committee Reports

- The Policy Impact, Forestry/Invasive Species and Recreation/Trails Committees did not meet since the last Council meeting.

Next Meeting

1. Next Meeting Date/Location: **Chair Buckingham** indicated the next meeting will be Wednesday, August 2 at the Munising Township Hall in Wetmore beginning at 6:00pm.

2. Items for Next Meeting Agenda

- **Chair Buckingham** indicated there is a request from DNR staff to switch next month's theme topics from Parks/Boating/Trails to Forestry/Marketing & Outreach. The Council agreed with the switch.
- **Chair Buckingham** indicated suggestions for topics for the next meeting can be submitted to him, Ms. Haughey or Ms. Dahlstrom. Suggested topics will be discussed at a pre-meeting with the Chair and DNR staff in July.

Public Comments

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

Closing Comments from Council

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

- **Vice Chair Gorniak** noted a very determined group who wishes to add four new wilderness areas in the Ottawa National Forest recently contacted him for support. Discussion ensued. **Ms. Haughey** stated she is aware of the efforts and indicated the DNR is not involved in that process.
- **Chair Buckingham** stated he recently shared a letter with Ms. Haughey from Great Lakes Timber Professionals to the DNR requesting an extension on logging contracts due to a lack of a market. **Mr. Hubbard** indicated the issue is statewide. **Ms. Haughey** acknowledged receipt of the letter.
- **Mr. Hubbard** mentioned he is very aware of the west side of the land involved in the proposed forest legacy project back when the Ford Motor Company was selling it to Cleveland Cliffs. **Ms. Haughey** stated tours of the area will be scheduled the same day as the next WUPCAC meeting in Baraga on July 10th if Council members are interested in seeing the property.
- **Vice Chair Gorniak** asked if there were any state-run indoor ranges in the Lower Peninsula. **Ms. Haughey** stated yes. The indoor range in the Upper Peninsula is in partnership with the local sportsman's club.

Adjourn

There being no further business, **Chair Buckingham** thanked everyone for attending. He adjourned the meeting at 7:44pm Eastern.