

Eastern Upper Peninsula Citizen Advisory Council (EUPCAC)
Meeting Minutes – APPROVED 12/20/2023
Wednesday, August 2, 2023
6:00-8:30pm Eastern
Munising Township Hall, Wetmore

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

Council Members Present

Tom Buckingham	Tim Hass	Glenn Moll
Ken Collier	Robert Liebermann	Joe Smith
Steve Dey	David Lieble	Tony Wright
Gary Gorniak	Mark Maida	

Council Members Excused/Absent

Grant Dewitt	Travis Kangas	Jack Thomas
Al Garavaglia	Tom Paquin	Julie Weist
Bernie Hubbard	Mark Spencer	

Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Staff Liaisons & Guests

PJ Costa, Parks & Recreation Division-Eastern UP Trails, Newberry
Don Brown, Wildlife Division, Newberry
Cody Norton, Wildlife Division, Marquette
Kristi Dahlstrom, Executive Division, Marquette
Sgt. Calvin Smith, Law Enforcement Division, Newberry
Stacy Haughey, UP Field Deputy, Executive Division, Marquette
Scott Lakosky, Forest Resources Division, Newberry
Jon Spieles, Marketing & Outreach Division, Newberry

Call to Order

The Eastern UP Citizens' Advisory Council meeting was called to order at 6:05pm 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. Wright supported the motion. Chair Buckingham called for a vote on the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

Introductions of Council Members/DNR Staff/Public Attendees

Chair Buckingham asked the Council and DNR staff to introduce themselves.

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

Chair Buckingham asked if there were any further changes to the June 13, 2023 meeting minutes which were distributed to the Council via email for review. **Mr. Hass motioned to accept the minutes as submitted; Mr. Collier supported the motion. Chair Buckingham called for a vote on the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

Chair Comments

Chair Buckingham stated after learning the factual details of the wolf attack stories that were circling on social media, those facts dispelled most of what was posted. He reminded folks that not

everything seen or read on social media is true or tells the whole story. He is looking forward to the end of summer and the beginning of hunting season.

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 July 26, 2023. The following were verbal additions to those reports:

1. Stacy Haughey, UP Field Deputy

- Introduced new Council member Mark Maida. **Mr. Maida** provided a brief overview of his background in guiding special needs and veterans in the woods or on the water almost every day. He stated he has picked up shifts at Tahquamenon Falls State Park and is strongly affiliated with the legion.
- A conversation was held with the Timbermen and the Chief of Forest Resources Division regarding contracts on state forest land and the downturn in the market for this region. The DNR is working with the jobbers and loggers to get what they need. A copy of the letter from Chief Stampfly is available if anyone would like a copy. **Chair Buckingham** concurred that there is no market right now. Ms. Haughey stated MEDC is also keeping an eye on the situation.
- The DNR budget was recently approved for FY 2024 and there are several great initiatives that were funded, included a new Nature Awaits program in which all 4th graders in the state can visit a state park for free. The Lt. Governor was at Tahquamenon Falls State Park last week to promote the program; **Ms. Haughey** brought her own 4th grader and toured the falls. Also in the budget is \$3.6 million of ongoing general fund dollars to support equal pay for conservation officers.
- Recent social media shamefully discredited a DNR biologist regarding a wolf attack. The DNR has an amazing team of people, and this biologist has over 25 years of experience, gone to multiple trainings on track identification, etc. Please be aware that many times social media is not factual.
- A groundbreaking ceremony will be held in the near future for the first Michigan-sourced mass timber facility that will be the new DNR customer service center in Newberry. The current facility is the last rented DNR office in the state. Bids have come in high and staff are working on getting additional funding for the gap. Once the groundbreaking date is set, Council members will be invited.

2. Scott Lakosky, Forest Resources Division-Eastern UP

- There were no new additions to the report.

3. Sgt. Calvin Smith, Law Enforcement Division, District 2

- There were no new additions to the report.

4. Jon Spieles, Marketing & Outreach Division

- A north version of the Academy of Natural Resources is being conducted this week at the Ford Education Center in Baraga. It is a great opportunity for teachers to focus on Michigan

forestry, ecology and how to manage the state's forests and is aligned with their curriculum. This program has been available for 12 years in Roscommon and 5 years in Baraga.

- **Mr. Wright** noted the DNR website now directs folks to *iNaturalist.com* when looking for information on frog calls or snakes, for example. The DNR offices have much better information than what is provided on this site. **Mr. Spieles** indicated he will talk with Mr. Wright after the meeting to find out more.

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

- The Alger County Road Commission plans to repave H-58 and notified the DNR they can no longer utilize the side of the road for snowmobile traffic at Miner's River. The conservation easement in place was thought to not allow a bridge over the river. However, a reading from the Attorney General's office indicated the trail can be moved with a crossing installed. There is money set aside to start the engineering. This is a long-term partnership and staff have been working very hard to find a solution. Several discussions between the road commission, Pictured Rocks and the county have taken place. Snowmobiles will still be allowed this winter before construction, but next winter it will be closed, and it is hoped that a new route will be open by then.

6. *Don Brown, Wildlife Division*

- There were no new additions to the report.

Old Business

1. *Wolf Management Update (Ms. Haughey)*

- **Ms. Haughey** noted NRC Chair Baird attended the December EUPCAC meeting to indicate what the NRC was working on in relation to a decision tree. She also reviewed at the April EUPCAC meeting the following: *"An excerpt from the February 9, 2023 approved Natural Resources Commission (NRC) meeting minutes was recited. In summary, the NRC Chair stated the commission will be working with DNR officials to establish a decision tree on what management options could be employed once wolves are no longer on the endangered species list and that the goal is to have the decision tree ready for the UP NRC meeting in October. Ms. Haughey reminded the group that NRC Chair Baird verbally reported this same sentiment when he attended the EUPCAC meeting last December."*
- The NRC plans to have this information presented at the October NRC Meeting which will be held on October 12th at Bay College in Escanaba.
- **Vice Chair Gorniak** asked what will be included in the presentation. **Ms. Haughey** indicated stakeholders have asked what NRC's strategy will be if delisting occurs. **Mr. Norton** added, for the October NRC meeting, NRC Chair Baird asked the DNR to provide what steps need to occur when wolves are delisted if or before a hunt were to be established by the NRC and the time involved for those steps. **Vice Chair Gorniak** asked if the NRC will consider the CAC's 2020 resolution regarding wolves. **Ms. Haughey** stated it is partly why this process is occurring. **Vice Chair Gorniak** stated the resolution asked for the wolf population to be reduced and that was not addressed in a response. **Ms. Haughey** stated the resolution asked for additions to be made to the wolf management plan and was submitted prior to the Wolf Management Advisory Council being appointed and revising the plan. Discussion ensued regarding the DNR not currently working with local sportsmen to address and identify the number of wolf packs in the area. **Ms. Haughey** stated that a presentation on a

wolf abundance study and tracking methods will be presented at the Joint UPCAC meeting on October 11th in Escanaba.

- **Mr. Maida** asked how a problem area is identified as the 2013 season was based off of livestock depredations and most were concentrated in three areas of the UP. **Vice Chair Gorniak** also asked if the effects on other species like deer will be taken into consideration. **Mr. Norton** stated the study will do that and will be further explained in the presentation. **Mr. Dey** asked how long it takes to come up with a hunting season; **Mr. Norton** stated that will be presented in October and would be according to the DNR Director and the NRC.

2. *DNR Response to Joint UPCAC Resolution – Cormorant Funding & Control (Ms. Haughey)*

- **Ms. Haughey** indicated a written response was not yet available, however, Randy Claramunt, Fisheries Chief, did spoke to Vice Chair Gorniak directly.
- **Vice Chair Gorniak** stated he speak with Chief Claramunt at a function they both attended and discussed what is needed to fund cormorant control and the need to work with legislators on securing the funding.
- **Ms. Haughey** stated she spoke to both chiefs of the Fisheries and Wildlife Divisions about the issue to brainstorm. It is recognized by the DNR that this is an important issue, but it can't all be controlled. Canada has a season and the US doesn't, for example. It is also agreed that both the state and federal sides need to collectively advocate on the issue. She has engaged the DNR's legislative liaison as well.
- It was asked if sponsors could be obtained for equipment. **Vice Chair Gorniak** further discussed the loss of equipment, loss of people, retraining needed, etc.
- **Ms. Haughey** stated the written resolution response will be available for the December meeting and suggestions and strategy can be discussed then. **Vice Chair Gorniak** stated he hopes a timeline can be developed as well.

New Business

1. *Nuisance Regulation Changes (Mr. Norton)*

- Cody Norton, Bear, Furbearer and Small Game Specialist for the Wildlife Division based in Marquette, presented an update on the recent nuisance regulation changes that were approved by the DNR Director at the May NRC Meeting. **Mr. Norton** reviewed the following slides.
- Process: Human-Wildlife Conflict Workgroup (developed recommendations); Furbearer Workgroup (refined trapping methods); NRC/Director (for information in April and for action in May).
- New Regulatory Changes: 1) wildlife damage control on private property, and 2) removal of beavers and beaver dams by road, drain, and railroad authorities.
- Wildlife Damage Control on Private Property:
 - Landowner/designee considered permittee (no written permit required, no hunting/trapping license required).
 - Reduce barriers and admin burden (generally, never deny permit for these types of damage).
 - Exempt from season dates but must follow hunting and trapping methods for each species (example, beaver=trap, coyote=hunt/trap, trap check requirements).
 - Not concerned with impacting populations (take already occurring under written permit, relatively comment species).
 - Clarify when species can be taken without written permit.

- Previous: woodchuck, skunk, raccoon and coyote can be taken if doing or about to do damage (unclear, interpreted differently).
- New: woodchuck, skunk, raccoon and coyote can be taken if doing or physically present where it could imminently cause damage.
- Define “damage”.
 - Previous: damage not defined, open to interpretation.
 - New: damage is physical harm to forest products, roads, dams, buildings, orchards, apiaries, livestock and horticultural or agricultural crops.
- Allow additional species to be taken without written permit.
 - Previous: woodchuck, skunk, raccoon and coyote.
 - New: beaver, cottontail rabbit, coyote, fox squirrel, gray squirrel, ground squirrel, muskrat, opossum, raccoon, red squirrel, skunk, weasel, and woodchuck. (Year-round hunting and trapping season: ground squirrel, opossum, red squirrel, weasel. Beaver or muskrat are only doing damage if flooding or culvert blockage. Written permit is required for dam removal.)
- Allow trapping of additional species.
 - Previous: only hunting methods for cottontail rabbits, fox squirrels, gray squirrels and woodchucks (municipal ordinance, safety zone, etc.).
 - New: allow trapping cottontail rabbits, fox squirrels, gray squirrels and woodchucks with specific methods (live traps, body-grip, footholds).
- New cottontail rabbit, fox squirrel, gray squirrel, and woodchuck trapping methods.
 - Live-restraining cage traps (not designed to catch more than one animal at a time, animal captured must be immediately released or killed, trap must be tended daily statewide).
- New cottontail rabbit, fox squirrel, gray squirrel and woodchuck trapping methods (body-gripping or conibear type traps (no greater than 6.5 inches inside jaw hinges, located inside of a building-in a hole in the ground that is covered and inaccessible from the surface, in a box or similar container with maximum opening diameter of 3 inches).
- New cottontail rabbit, fox squirrel, gray squirrel and woodchuck trapping methods (foothold traps-in a box or similar container with a maximum opening diameter of 3 inches).
- Removal of beavers and beaver dams by road, drain, and railroad authorities.
 - Previous: entities must have written permit (public safety, administrative burden).
 - New: entities can remove beavers, dams, etc., that threaten infrastructure within right of ways without written permit (valid base license and fur harvester license or nuisance animal control company, otherwise legal trapping methods, doesn’t preclude EGLE authority).
- Both
 - Animals taken under new regulations can be possessed or disposed of at the discretion of the permittee.
 - Any activities not covered by new regulations would still require a written permit.
- Responses to MTPCA Notes (in response to Council member Mark Spencer’s comments he circulated to the Council)
 - Landowner can’t trap on state land and can’t destroy the dam.
 - Correctly identifying cause of damage, opportunities for other fur harvesters, trapping license required.

- Impacts to trout spawning habitat flooding of properties downstream.
- Can't take muskrat causing bank erosion.
 - How to define bank damage without allowing unlimited taken on all private lands.
- Concern for take of incidental otters.
 - Nuisance beaver trapping already occurring under written permit.
 - Language in Fur Harvester Digest - will add to website.
- Questions:
 - **Vice Chair Gorniak** stated he is happy with the regulations except for beaver. He feels the take will go up without the permit system with people overusing it. **Mr. Norton** stated if everyone follows what the regulations state, they are expecting a similar number.

2. Summary of DNR Marketing & Outreach Division Responsibilities (Mr. Spieles)

- **Mr. Spieles** presented a brief overview of some of the divisions' responsibilities which essentially are paths to the DNR and outdoors.
- *Online/DNR Website/Calls:* 16 million page views on the DNR's website. 2 million users with 5 million topic subscriptions. 1 million combined social followers with 5,000 posts this year. License sales and campground reservations, DNR Hunt Fish App, 20,000 callers to the DNR help desk.
- *Shooting Ranges:* 8 staffed shooting ranges (all in southeastern Michigan) with renovations or construction of 5 more. Pittman-Robertson dollars are a huge advantage to developing these ranges.
- *Sportsmen Against Hunger Program:* Buy a license at any vendor or online and those dollars go to the Michigan Sportsmen Against Hunger non-profit group. They used those dollars for the processing of deer. There are lots of volunteers involved. \$120,000 was donated in the last year, but they spent more than that on 72,000 pounds of venison that was prepared by 27 different processors and brought to 94 food banks across the state. It's a very worthwhile program.
- *Education:* There are several full-time interpretive programs around the state. 50,000 school kids will have gone through programs this year, plus campers and families who attend programs in state parks. They learn basic natural resources. Salmon in the Classroom has 300 schools signed up this coming fall. It provides hands on learning, with kids feeding the fish, watching them grow and the lessons are related to their curriculum.
- *Michigan Wildlife Council:* This council was legislatively enacted in 2013-2014 and \$1 from every base license and fishing license sold goes to this fund totaling \$1.5 million per year. It is set in statute and the members are Governor appointed. The intent is to help residents understand the role of hunting and fishing. A hired marketing firm did a ton of research on baseline knowledge. The groups' activities, research, marketing, and development was further explained.
- *Nature Awaits:* In the DNR's 2024 budget, the state provided the DNR with the dollars necessary to develop a program to get every 4th grader (115,000 kids, 15,000 school bus loads) to a state park for free. They will receive a nature booklet to write in during their school curriculum and then they can turn in the booklet in at a state park. Staff are working on the process and details now. Marketing will target teachers.
- *Harvest Reporting (300,000 downloads):* Improvements have been made to the app from last year, especially pertaining to the pin drop. This year, users will select their county and

geographic township. This is a compromise with the Wildlife Division. The app is for deer only at this point since bear still needs to be sealed.

- **Questions:**
 - **Mr. Wright** asked if the Nature Awaits program pertains to both private and public schools. **Mr. Spieles** stated it hasn't been determined yet; the language states public schools.
 - **Vice Chair Gorniak** stated he feels that how people feel about hunting as a sport or as recreational is skewed by marketing put out by anti-groups. He also didn't realize that license vendors receive 7.5% profit from selling licenses.
 - **Mr. Spieles** added that former EUPCAC member Jason Garvon is a member of the Wildlife Council as was Jim Hammill from SCI.
 - **Mr. Maida** asked if the DNR is moving towards just one digital sports card for all licenses. He stated his vehicle dashboard is covered in all different licenses for all types of hunting and fishing. He feels it would be a great savings to the DNR. **Mr. Spieles** stated he believes the DNR will get to that point in the future as there is a clear customer service and business service case to move in that direction. There are still some people though who are not digitized. **Sgt. Smith** added around 50% of those people they check have their fishing license on the app or saved on their phone.

3. **Forest Resources Division Infrastructure Investments in the Eastern UP (Mr. Lakosky)**

- **Mr. Lakosky** stated the division has seen an influx of monies and showcased some of the divisions' recent projects in the eastern UP.
- Prout Road Washout-Mackinac County
 - 260' of 4-6' wide and 3' deep washout caused by spring runoff
 - Joint project with PRD
 - Total cost was \$42,000 and was split between the divisions
 - Completed by the contractor in June
- Beavertail Creek Culvert Replacement
 - Joint project with Chippewa County Road Commission and Huron Pines
 - Grant funds were received for replacement of multiple stream crossings in the area, including one on state-owned land
 - DNR entered into an agreement with the CCRC to leverage grant funds.
 - Total cost to the DNR is \$45,000
 - Work to be completed by October 2024
 - Great project to leverage funds
- Spile Dam Road over by Rudyard, Chippewa County
 - Improvement of approximately 1.5 miles of spile dam road
 - Improvements include level and reshaping the road bed and capping with gravel
 - Work began in July and will be completed by Oct
 - Total budget is \$220,185
- Camp 7 Road and Charcoal Grade Improvements-Luce County
 - Improvements to approximately 10 miles of the road include filling water and mud holes and capping the road with gravel from the Camp 7 pit
 - Total budget is \$205,000
- Murphy Creek Bridge in Luce County
 - Replacement of the bridge over Murphy Creek on the charcoal grade
 - Work began in July and will be completed by October

- Total budget is \$466,500
- Linton, Penny, Savage, and Otto Brandt Bridge Replacements-Luce County
 - Replacement of 4 stream crossings on the Charcoal Grade
 - Work to begin in August and be completed by October
 - Total budget is \$1,300,000
- Beaverview Bridge in Schoolcraft County
 - Done in house with DNR staff
 - Purchase and install new 50' long temporary bridge over Holland Creek for timber sale access
 - Total budget is \$80,000
- Hudson Creek Road in Schoolcraft County
 - Grade and spot gravel sand holes on Hudson creek road
 - Total budget \$40,000, done with DNR staff
- Mint Farm Road in Schoolcraft County
 - Fill, shape and cap with gravel, several large mud holes
 - Total budget is \$18,000
- Stanley Lake Road Bridge, Schoolcraft County
 - Remove existing ford crossing and replace with a 50' clear span steel bridge, rated for log truck use for timber access and heavy recreational use
 - Work has begun and will be completed by October
 - Total budget is \$740,000
- Shingleton Fire Shop in Alger County (Facility Project)
 - Conversion of cold storage area to heated work area
 - Total budget is \$25,000
- Wyman State Forest Nursery-Schoolcraft County (Facility Project)
 - Replacement and upgrades to the HVAC system throughout the office and repair shop
 - Total budget is \$202,100
- Manistique Fire Shop, Schoolcraft County (Facility Project)
 - Construction of a new 4,000 sf shop and office for fire staff and equipment
 - Total budget is \$1,400,000
- Investment Summary
 - Road and bridge repair and replacement – \$3.1 million
 - Roughly 15 miles of state forest road impacted
 - 7 existing stream crossings replaced
 - One new temp crossing installed for timber sale access
 - Facility Upgrades and construction \$1.6 million
 - Significant operational and energy efficiency upgrades
 - Complete the move of the Thompson Fire Shop to Manistique
- Questions:
 - **Mr. Maida** asked who to notify when a washout or an issue is found. **Mr. Lakosky** indicated to contact the Newberry customer service center.
 - **Mr. Collier** asked what the future projects would be. **Mr. Lakosky** stated there are 8-10 prioritized projects in the \$20-80,000 range that are proposed. Some larger projects came in too high and some may get cut. **Mr. Maida** asked if the list can be shared. **Mr. Lakosky** stated he will bring it to the next meeting.

- **Chair Buckingham** asked about the Charcoal grade. **Mr. Costa** stated improvements stopped at Murphy. It has been advertised that the trail is closed and the landowners were contacted.
- **Mr. Maida** asked about capital outlay projects versus operational projects and categorizing them. He also asked about the culvert inventory project. **Mr. Lakosky** explained.
- **Mr. Collier** thanked Mr. Lakosky for the presentation stating it had a lot of good information.

4. 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 noted in 2022, both the East and West Councils passed a resolution asking for several fisheries-related items, one of which was drainable rearing ponds for walleye rearing. The Fisheries chief response at the time mentioned the state of the art facility at the Thompson Hatchery, which is capable of producing 250,000 walleye a year. However, in the last three years, they have only produced between 6,000-18,000 walleye. He is wondering why that is and feels the public is getting shortchanged on walleye stocking efforts. **Ms. Haughey** indicated she would have to reach out to the hatchery manager for a response. She also suggested a possible tour of the hatchery and holding a council meeting nearby in the next year.

2. Wildlife Committee (Mr. Dey)

- **Mr. Dey** indicated he received an email from a member of the WUPCAC asking for an opinion on using crossbows in December in the southern areas of the UP. There was a joint conference call between the EUPCAC and WUPCAC wildlife committees to discuss it further. The suggestion was to recommend crossbow use in December from Escanaba to Iron River and south of US 2. **Mr. Dey** encouraged any opinions to be sent to him. **Mr. Wright** stated he doesn't feel there is enough deer in Schoolcraft County to warrant it. **Chair Buckingham** noted current regulations allow crossbow use through the close of rifle season, but in late season, it is not allowed. He stated there is time to evaluate this more closely as regulations are on a 3-year timeline and being that regulations were just reviewed and revised this year, there is time for more thought.

3. Policy Impact Committee (Mr. Hass)

- **Mr. Hass** distributed an informational handout of legislation recently introduced in the Michigan Legislature pertaining to DNR-related topics: Senate Bill 457 (Use of Helmets While Operating a Snowmobile), Senate Bill 456 (Use of Helmets While Operating an ORV), House Bill 4855 (Add 3 New Members to the Wolf Management Advisory Council) and House Bill 4856 (Add New Members to the State Wildlife Council). He stated the handout is not his interpretation, but rather an excerpt of what exactly was introduced. All of these bills have been referred to committee and are a long way from being passed and/or considered by the DNR. He encouraged Council members to review the information and submit any comments or opinions to local senators or representatives. **Vice Chair Gorniak** mentioned if there are strong opinions, contact statewide organizations since the UP only carries 3% of the vote.

4. Other Committee Reports

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

Next Meeting

1. Joint UPCAC Meeting: Wednesday, October 11 from 3:00-5:00pm in Escanaba. The NRC meeting will be held the following day on October 12 beginning at 9:00am at Bay College in Escanaba.
2. Next Regular EUPAC Meeting: **Chair Buckingham** indicated the next meeting will be Wednesday, December 20 at 6:00pm. After discussion by the Council, meeting in-person in December was agreed upon.
3. Agenda Items for Both Upcoming Meetings
 - Dr. Tyler Petroelje, DNR wildlife researcher, is planning to provide a presentation on the wolf abundance project at the Joint UPCAC Meeting.
 - **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.

Public Comments (Any Topic)

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.

- **Mr. Liebel** expressed his thanks to the DNR staff for attending the meeting.
- **Chair Buckingham** thanked Forest Resources staff for fixing the Charcoal grade.

Adjourn

There being no further business, **Chair Buckingham** thanked everyone for attending. He adjourned the meeting at 9:08pm Eastern.