

Eastern Upper Peninsula Citizen Advisory Council (EUPCAC)
Meeting Minutes – APPROVED 12/15/22
Thursday, August 4, 2022
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	David Lieble
Jeff Cox	Bernie Hubbard	Mark Spencer
Gary Gorniak	Travis Kangas	Tony Wright

Council Members Excused/Absent

Jarrold Biebel	Kevin Erickson	Tom Paquin
Ken Collier	Al Garavaglia	Jack Thomas
Grant Dewitt	Robert Liebermann	Julie Weist

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
Randy Espinoza, Fisheries Division-Thomson State Fish Hatchery
Lt. Skip Hagy, Law Enforcement Division, Newberry
Stacy Haughey, UP Field Deputy, Executive Division, Marquette
Scott Lakosky, Forest Resources Division, Newberry
Dave Lemmien, Wildlife Division, Sault Ste. Marie
Dan Sampson, Fisheries Division-Marquette/Thompson/Oden State Fish Hatcheries
Jon Spieles, Marquette & Outreach Division, Newberry
Tom Weston, Marketing & Outreach Division-Licensing, Lansing (virtually)

Call to Order/Introductions

The Eastern UP Citizens' Advisory Council meeting began at 6:00pm with **Chair Buckingham** welcoming everyone to the meeting. He indicated the Council is one member short of a quorum and as such, will not consider or vote on any resolutions. Council members, staff, and public attendees in the room introduced themselves.

Adoption of Agenda

Chair Buckingham 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; Vice Chair Gorniak supported the motion. Ayes: All. Nays: None. Absent: See listing on page 1. Motion carried.**

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

Chair Buckingham asked the Council if there were any corrections to the June 7, 2022, EUPCAC meeting minutes which were emailed to the Council previously. **Mr. Kangas** made one clarification in wording on page 7. **Vice Chair Gorniak** asked if an answer was received to a question posed to Sen. Peters representative who was present at the April EUPCAC meeting; **Ms. Dahlstrom** indicated a response was

included in the division reports. **Mr. Kangas motioned to approve the minutes with clarification; Mr. Wright supported the motion. Ayes: All. Nays: None. Absent: See listing on page 1. Motion carried.**

Chair Comments

Chair Buckingham indicated he received an email from **Secretary Thomas** and one item he requested was to reintroduce a wolf management update as a recurring Old Business agenda item for future meetings. He asked if the Council objected; no objections were received. This will take effect at the next regular meeting.

Public Comments on Agenda Items

Chair Buckingham opened the floor for public comments on agenda items only.

1. *Dick Pershinske of Engadine (Wolf Management Advisory Council Member and former EUPCAC Chair):*
Mr. Pershinske spoke about his 10 months serving on the Wolf Management Advisory Council (WMAC) and his frustration and disappointment in the meeting process, the lack of response to and inclusion of the council's 35 recommendations to the revised draft of the wolf management plan, of which 27 were disregarded, and upon conclusion of the last council meeting, no consensus on language to submit to the legislature and DNR. He stated the council was put in place for two years, and he is not sure where it is headed at this point. He questioned the need for a separate group or committee in the UP that could be more productive; if one were created, he would volunteer to serve on it.
 - **Mr. Hass** asked if it would help to put it on the ballot for the people to decide. Mr. Pershinske stated it had been done before and did not go well. He stated it is a serious issue and added the Attorney General (AG) of Michigan supports wolves being listed, which is counterproductive to what needs to be done. **Ms. Haughey** noted the DNR Director wrote a letter (the same day the AG's opinion was published) indicating he applauded the delisting. Mr. Pershinske stated he is not giving up and will do whatever needs to be done.
 - **Mr. Hoy** mentioned in Wyoming, Idaho and Montana, legislators were instrumental in allowing a hunt and asked how that can be done in Michigan. He feels if Michigan legislators do not support a hunt, it will be a dead end; Mr. Pershinske agreed.

2. *Mr. Stephen Dey of Moran:* Mr. Dey shared his frustrations with the revised wolf management plan, noting the plan indicates a review will not take place for another 10 years, which is unacceptable to him. He stated the plan also does not indicate how many wolves the UP can support, the social carrying capacity or population goals. It also only mentioned recreational hunts and not management hunts. He believes an operational addendum needs to be added. He stated residents, hunters, and members of the agricultural community are not happy with the plan.
 - **Mr. Hass** offered to draft a detailed, point-by-point resolution on what the EUPCAC and the public recommends to the DNR, if the council wishes.
 - **Ms. Haughey** thanked both Mr. Pershinske and Mr. Dey for their comments and indicated she appreciated Mr. Pershinske's time and efforts while serving on the WMAC, noting Mr. Pershinske was previously first chairman of the EUPCAC and served for many years. Since Old Business Item #2 is related to this discussion, she moved ahead to that item on the agenda (see page 4).

DNR Reports from Division Staff

Written staff reports were provided via email to Council members on July 28, 2022. The following were verbal additions to those reports:

1. Stacy Haughey, UP Field Deputy:

- **Ms. Haughey** thanked Council members and guests for attending the social event held before the meeting at the Munising marina pavilion.
- A verbal update on the AuTrain Basin was given, with information coming from Ms. Elle Gulotty of the DNR's Dam Management Program: *"In summary, the situation at Au Train still is almost entirely in the hands of Renewable World Energies (RWE), the licensee and owner of the Au Train project. DNR and EGLE have been responsive and are monitoring this situation closely but are not able to compel RWE. DNR and EGLE have repeatedly and consistently expressed concerns to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) which issues licenses, and oversees compliance, and DNR is on the record about our interest in ensuring fish, wildlife, and public use and safety are addressed appropriately by RWE in their plans for the disposition of the project."*

2. Scott Lakosky, Forest Resources Division:

- Regarding the herbicide work noted in the report, only one site in the Sault Ste. Marie management unit remains.
- Lightning strikes have caused several fires; fire danger is gradually improving with recent rains.
- Trout Unlimited will be doing some culvert counting and a work crew just moved to Drummond Island this week.

3. Lt. Skip Hagy, Law Enforcement Division:

- The academy is down to 14 recruits, with 3 others pre-certified. These recruits will be in the field in 2023.
- Officers have been very busy this summer. A reminder to wear life jackets when out on the water was given in light of a recent tragic drowning incident with a teenage boy.
- **Vice Chair Gorniak** thanked Lt. Hagy for following up on his comment at an earlier council meeting regarding the hunters' safety program. **Vice Chair Gorniak** stated he appreciated speaking to Lt. Wanless as a result of the follow-up. **Ms. Haughey** noted the division's UP recreational safety position was filled with CO Doug Hermanson, which will increase communication with UP instructors.

4. Jon Spieles, Marketing & Outreach Division:

- A Waterfowl Festival will be held August 6-7 at the Saginaw Bay Visitor Center at the Bay City State Recreation Area. About 10,000 people attend this yearly event and includes waterfowl-related items for sale.
- The UP State Fair will be held August 14-21 in Escanaba and the DNR Pocket Park will be open to visitors. Volunteers are needed. Ms. Kristi Dahlstrom and Ms. Jo Ann Alexander manage the park and do a professional job.

5. Eric Cowing, Parks & Recreation Division:

- The division is the first in the state to begin using the federal funding allocated for state park infrastructure improvements. Mackinac Island harbor is receiving a new toilet and shower

building, Palms Book improvements are starting now and Lime Island improvements will start in the fall.

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

- No additional updates from what was listed in the report.

7. Dave Lemmien, Wildlife Division:

- **Mr. Lemmien** indicated he is the new UP Regional Manager for the Wildlife Division and is based out of the DNR Sault Ste. Marie office. His territory is the entire UP.
- He has been with the DNR Forestry Division for the past 27 years, beginning in Traverse City, then in Newberry as a forester for 5-6 years, and then back to the Traverse City area for the last 19 years. Although he has a background in forestry, his ability to work and collaborate with people and achieve objectives will help him in this position.
- He is aware of the difficult challenges that exist and lie ahead and with the Council's assistance, he is hopeful to develop common goals and solutions.
- The Escanaba biologist position has been offered and is in the process of waiting for acceptance. The Sault Ste. Marie wildlife technician position will also be posted. After these two positions are filled, the eastern UP will be fully staffed.
- **Vice Chair Gorniak** asked if there was an update on the wolf count held this spring. **Mr. Lemmien** stated he did not have this information available and will forward it once he receives it.

Old Business

1. Snowmobile Club Update (Mr. Costa):

- At the last meeting, a discussion took place regarding the struggling snowmobile club in the Straits area.
- Those running the club have very busy summer jobs resulting in difficulty running the ORV section and they have decided to let that go. Another person stepped in and has a good crew to help get things running smoothly. **Mr. Costa** spent a day with him last week to visit several trails and problem areas. Grant monies from the Straits club will be used by the new crew until October which will give them time to work with the new grant cycle.
- **Mr. Hass** stated he was asked to assist with this difficult situation by a member of the crew. He worked with Mr. Costa and Ms. Haughey, and he appreciated the two of them coming together to create a workable solution and prevent a crisis.
- Snowmobile permit sales are holding steady. Through June was 136,720 statewide; last year at the same time was 138,833.
- ORV permit sales this year are currently down 8% at 221,000 to date, compared to 241,000 for all of 2021. Last year during the pandemic was a banner year. Previous year numbers were 204,000 in 2020 and 174,000 in 2019.
- 9 new groomers have been funded this year and are being delivered. A special appropriation is being requested to fund more.

2. Draft of Revised Wolf Management Plan/Deadline for Online Comments August 4 (Ms. Haughey):

- The Wolf Management Advisory Council (WMAC) was created by statute. **Ms. Haughey** agreed with Mr. Pershinske who stated earlier the tough meeting process could have been better established.
- The 2014 statewide ballot proposal mentioned earlier lost 45% to 55%.

- A public attitude survey was also part of the revised plan process this year.
- The deadline for public comment on the draft of the revised wolf management plan is this evening, August 4. If anyone has information, comments, or sentiments they would like known, it is important to channel them to the online questionnaire provided in the press release.
- Any decisions on this matter will be made by the Natural Resources Commission.
- Slides from a presentation by Mr. Cody Norton, large carnivore specialist, titled Tribal Consultation on Wolf Management Plan were shown. Tribal talks are a private process. Slides indicated the progress to date, which included conducting a public attitude survey, conducting a scientific review, input on the 2014 wolf management plan through tribal consultation, the WMAC and public comment, and writing of the draft 2022 plan. Tribal consultation and public comment are now occurring on the draft updated plan, after which the final plan will be updated.
- It is currently earmarked for information and the Director's signature at the October 13th NRC Meeting being held in Marquette.
- **Vice Chair Gorniak** stated things have changed significantly since the 2014 ballot proposal with more wolves and the ability to regulate the taking of game given to the NRC. He argued the DNR should be using the average number of wolves versus the minimum number. **Ms. Haughey** indicated Mr. Roell provided a presentation on the reasoning behind using a minimum number and stated perhaps the DNR does not emphasize the term minimum enough.
- **Mr. Cox** stated, for the sake of discussion, he does not feel the general population in the lower peninsula have changed their minds about wolves since 2014. He noted he agrees there needs to be a management plan that includes how a hunt would occur; however, he does not believe the public in the lower peninsula think any differently than they did in 2014.
- **Mr. Spencer** indicated only 3-4 lower peninsula counties statewide did not agree to have a wolf hunt in the 2014 ballot proposal and those populous counties outvoted all others in the state. He feels the legislators and public in those areas are not concerned with wolves as they don't exist there. He stated Mr. Hass's bullet point resolution might help educate others. **Ms. Haughey** noted when a wolf hunt occurred, there weren't a lot of applications to get the license.
- **Mr. Wright** suggested an independent committee may be beneficial and should include those in research and academia who wouldn't approach a management strategy emotionally. Discussion took place regarding where the NRC obtains their information, including from DNR staff as well as a variety of public sources (emails, letters, calls, etc.). **Chair Buckingham** stated he feels the NRC is heavily influenced by staff and the Director and suggested an uninfluenced non-DNR moderator with no voting capability be obtained if another council or committee was formed. **Ms. Haughey** indicated the WMAC was formed and functioned according to the statute in which it was created, according to law. Mr. Pershinske indicated the first wolf council had a moderator and it functioned much better. Discussion ensued.

3. *DNR Response to Joint UPCAC Resolution re: Fisheries Budget (Ms. Haughey):*

- A copy of the DNR's response to the Joint UPCAC's resolution regarding the Fisheries Budget and a request for additional enhancements to the walleye fishery was included in the meeting packets.
- The response indicated the one-time General Fund investment is intended to address deferred infrastructure needs, improve efficiency, and enhance biosecurity at state fish hatcheries including construction of a coolwater fish production facility at Wolf Lake to better support walleye, northern pike, and muskellunge production.

- The response also noted the DNR recently completed construction of a facility for walleye and muskellunge rearing at the Thompson State Fish Hatchery in Manistique that will provide for enhanced rearing of these two species in the UP.

New Business

1. Thompson State Fish Hatchery Overview (Mr. Dan Sampson & Mr. Randy Espinoza):

- **Mr. Dan Sampson**, Hatchery Supervisor for Thompson, Marquette, and Oden State Fish Hatcheries, and **Mr. Randy Espinoza**, On-Site Manager for Thompson State Fish Hatchery, introduced themselves and thanked Ms. Haughey for the earlier social event which provided an opportunity to visit with council members before the meeting. **Mr. Espinoza** has been with Thompson since 2008.
- An overview of the Thompson hatchery, upcoming capital outlay projects, walleye rearing, and upcoming funding was provided.
- Overview: Located in Manistique, the facility was established around 1919 and was rebuilt in the 1970s. The original purpose was for trout stocking. A natural spring, several shallow wells, and two deep geothermal wells provide its water sources.
- Stocking for Species: The primary purpose for the hatchery is steelhead yearlings. Chinook-350,000, Steelhead-200,000 (fall fingerlings) and 614,000 (yearlings), Muskellunge-20,000 this past year (varies year to year), Walleye-1 million (fry) and spring fingerlings-variable. Walleye will vary due to the weather.
- Recent Capitol Outlay Project & Upgrades-Coldwater Facility: A coldwater facility was built and completed in 2021 with a \$10 million appropriation. The funds were also used for electrical upgrades, recoating of indoor tanks, a new automated feeding system for outdoor fish tanks, a new incubation building and ponds for walleye and muskellunge, drainable ponds with rubber liners, and two new wells. A new coolwater addition provides for biosecurity, increased walleye stocking in the UP and splits muskie rearing between two facilities. Ponds are used in the spring/summer for walleye and late summer/fall for muskellunge. They are emptied in the winter to prevent ice damage.
- Walleye: During the construction project, staff were conducting a lot of research on the best ways to rear walleyes through discussions with universities, other hatcheries, literature, tribal and state entities. Few have lined ponds, similar geographic latitude and use well water. Unlike trout and salmon, much more “art” is required for pond rearing in addition to science. Rely heavily on Mother Nature. Pond rearing trials take years to learn from; cannot make too many changes at once or factors that helped or hurt are not known.
- Walleye Lifecycle for the Hatchery: There is no cookbook recipe for any hatchery or pond. Stages of rearing include obtaining eggs and incubation, pond prep and zooplankton, walleye fry, stocking to public water.
- Walleye Eggs: Little Bay de Noc walleyes are used, spawned at the Rapid River boat ramp. Timing is variable, usually late March to early May. About 34 days to be ready for ponds or stocking as fry. The public is welcome to come and watch.
- Pond Prep & Zooplankton: Turn a sterile bathtub into a fish rearing pond within two weeks. While eggs are still incubating, rubber lined ponds are filled with well water, ponds are fertilized with alfalfa, yeast, etc., local zooplankton is obtained, and then hope for warm and sunny weather which creates phytoplankton, enhances zooplankton reproduction, and feeds the walleye.
- Walleye Fry: Many fry sent to rearing ponds all around the UP. Additional fry, if/when available, can be stocked directly into public waters. Requires smallest zooplankton early on; need heat for

reproduction. Fry go to ponds for roughly 5-6 weeks of growth. Fingerlings near 2” have ability to cannibalize. Pond data is taken daily.

- Walleye Stocking: All fish get stocked into public waters since the program is mostly funded by sportsman’s dollars (license fees). DNR field staff determine where hatchery fish get stocked, not the public. In 2021, 2 million fry stocked, 6,500 spring fingerlings, experimental/cold spring hurt production. In 2022, 1.18 million fry stocked, 65,000 spring fingerlings, fertilization experimentation, cannibalism issue. Spring fingerlings from ponds are 1-3” long and are stocked in late June/early July.
- Walleye Production for 2023: More fish is anticipated for stocking. Two years of hatchery pond data will help guide planning and decisions. Note, this program is still in its infancy; it will take time to dial in specifics. Always need help from Mother Nature (warm and sunshine) for the food source.
- One-Time \$30 Million Budget Allotment for Hatcheries: The purpose of the funding is to protect investment by addressing backlog of maintenance issues, biosecurity, and energy efficiency needs. Examples specific to the Thompson Hatchery include rearing tank resurfacing and insulation repair and humidity control. Examples in other DNR hatcheries include Wolf Lake coolwater rearing upgrades, building repairs, electrical upgrades, high-efficiency equipment upgrades and pavement repairs. Funds have not been available to pay for these expensive upgrades, some of which are 40-60 years old.
- Questions:
 - **Vice Chair Gorniak** asked if downstate hatcheries use well water. **Mr. Espinoza** stated Wolf Lake uses well water, but others are using ground ponds. They do not raise walleyes like Thompson does. Zooplankton and weather are definite issues.
 - **Mr. Kangas** asked if its possible to rear the plankton beforehand, perhaps with geothermal heating of the ponds. **Mr. Espinoza** agreed this would be very helpful, however, the cost for heating the ponds could be interesting. Natural ponds get bycatch and can introduce fish that outcompete and eat fry which is why well water is used. Lime ponds with well water does well for the musky program.
 - **Vice Chair Gorniak** asked if zooplankton can be raised indoors. **Mr. Espinoza** stated it was tried and didn’t work. They can certainly do it different, but it takes time and experimentation. Discussion ensued on various ideas.
 - **Chair Buckingham** thanked Mr. Sampson and Mr. Espinoza for the informative presentation.

2. New DNR Mobile App (Mr. Tom Weston):

- **Ms. Haughey** introduced Mr. Tom Weston, DNR Chief Technology Officer, who attended virtually **Mr. Weston** indicated he has overseen the implementation of the new licensing system.
- In early 2020, a 2.5-year implementation of the new licensing system began with 1,600 retailers around the state. The new system added a lot of new functionality. The last part of the implementation is the mobile app (Michigan DNR Hunt Fish app).
- The e-license website was launched in 2000. In 2019 only 12% of sales took place through the website. In 2020, due to the pandemic, it rose to 25% and in 2021 to 27%. This year, 2022, it hit 30%. This is important as 70% of those 30% are using a mobile phone to buy their licenses. The mobile app is for the audience who prefers to buy licenses and permits, report harvests and access digests in a mobile format.
- An onscreen view of the app was shown. All digests and licenses will be available to view, once downloaded, as long as there is battery power to the phone. No cell service is needed.

- Auto-renewals, now available, will allow the system to automatically renew licenses previously purchased when the opportunity exists to purchase them. A notice will occur one week before a credit card is charged. The app does not store credit card information.
- As of 8/4/22, 400 customers have downloaded the app. Its availability will officially be announced at the August 11th NRC meeting. Downloading of the app and accessing the digests so they can be opened when out of coverage areas was highly encouraged.
- For harvest reporting, if there are any questions or difficulty registering on the app, all DNR offices can be called to help customers navigate the app.
- Last year, 6,800 hunters voluntarily reported their harvest. 1,000 left a comment and **Mr. Weston** stated he read every one. Some indicated the map was clunky and it was fixed. Others welcomed the DNR into the 21st century. Michigan was the first state in 2000 to sell licenses online (via website) and have lagged behind other states, however, in offering a mobile app. A lot has been learned from Ohio, Indiana, and Missouri's mobile apps.
- Questions:
 - Mr. Dey from the audience asked if there was any way to report a wolf/dog encounter on the app. **Mr. Weston** stated it can be reported in the Eyes in the Field option the DNR website, and will look into adding it to the app.
 - **Mr. Spencer** asked if furbearer reporting is included on the app. **Mr. Weston** indicated he will investigate this as well since it technically is done now in another format. **Mr. Spencer** stated it would help the tracking community with timelines.

3. DNR Pocket Park Volunteers/UP State Fair in Escanaba (Ms. Dahlstrom):

- **Ms. Dahlstrom** indicated the DNR Pocket Park is seeking volunteers to mentor children in outdoor recreation activities at the park during the UP State Fair, August 14-21.
- The DNR Pocket Park is a one-acre wooded park located on the north side of the state fairgrounds in Escanaba (aerial photos were shown). The park's fish pond is in the shape of the UP and stocked with bluegill. The park also includes a pellet gun range, an archery range, and a fire tower. The park is always open to the public Monday through Friday throughout the summer and is free to use.
- Over 200 volunteers are needed during fair week to accommodate all visitors during the fair. EUPCAC member Mr. Tony Wright has volunteered the last several years along with a few past and current members from the WUPCAC as well.
- Shifts and positions include fishing pond, archery and pellet gun range, fire tower, greeters, Smokey bounce house helpers, rounders, hospitality hosts, and fish shack repair helper.
- Those interested in volunteering can contact Ms. Dahlstrom by email or phone.

4. Additional Agenda Items Added by Council: There were no additional items added.

Subcommittee Reports

1. Fisheries Subcommittee Report (Vice Chair Gorniak):

- **Vice Chair Gorniak** discussed the reason why more walleyes are needed to be stocked. He stated after having a discussion with Mr. Wesley in the DNR Fisheries Division, about the sportsman's club's poor stocking results, they switched to fall walleyes and are now seeing a noticeable difference. He added the request to raise fall walleyes is falling on deaf ears in Lansing. He noted although fall walleyes are more expensive, the results are better.

2. Policy Impact Subcommittee Report (Mr. Hass):
 - There are no items currently before the committee.

Next Meeting

1. Next EUPCAC Meeting: **Chair Buckingham** indicated the next meeting is a Joint UPCAC meeting scheduled for Wednesday, October 12, from 3:00-5:00pm in Marquette. The UP NRC meeting will be held the next day, also in Marquette, beginning at 9:00am. The next regular EUPCAC meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, December 14th from 6-8:30pm at the LMAS District Health Department conference room in Newberry.
2. Items for Next Meeting Agenda: **Chair Buckingham** noted topics or issues for the Joint UPCAC agenda or the next regular EUPCAC agenda can be sent to him, Ms. Haughey, or Ms. Dahlstrom.

Public Comments (Any Topic)

Chair Buckingham opened the floor for public comments on any topic.

1. *Mr. Jim Hoy of Newberry:* Mr. Hoy asked if there is anything he can do to get the wolves off the federal list by attending the NRC. **Ms. Haughey** stated she is not sure there is anything they can do, but it is helpful for them to hear what he would like them to do.
2. *Mr. Dick Pershinske of Engadine:* Mr. Pershinske thanked the council for the opportunity to speak to them and stated, “keep up the good work in continuing what was started years ago.”

Closing Comments from the Council

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

1. **Vice Chair Gorniak** stated he is very involved in the wolf process and has worked with Mr. Dey on several related items. He indicated he is very disappointed, like Mr. Pershinske, on the way the process went. The updates to the draft wolf management plan were nothing what the WMAC asked for. He attended 8 of the 10 meetings in person and gave comments each time. He felt it was a waste of time and stated someone needs to listen to their side of this issue. Mr. Hoy asked what could the public ask the NRC to do. **Mr. Gorniak** stated the process for a wolf hunt needs to be determined in the plan, so when the time comes, a hunt could happen; once wolves are delisted again, this process will have to start all over. Mr. Pershinske noted the word “recreational” will be removed from all the documents according to the Director.

Adjourn

There being no further business, **Chair Buckingham** thanked everyone for attending. He adjourned the meeting at 8:45pm Eastern.