

**Eastern Upper Peninsula Citizen Advisory Council (EUPCAC)**  
**Meeting Minutes – APPROVED 4/26/23**  
**Thursday, December 15, 2022**  
**6:00-8:30pm Eastern**  
**Virtual Meeting via Zoom**

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

**Council Members Present**

Tom Buckingham	Tim Hass	Jack Thomas
Ken Collier	Bernie Hubbard	Julie Weist
Jeff Cox	Travis Kangas	Tony Wright
Grant Dewitt	Robert Liebermann	
Gary Gorniak	Mark Spencer	

**Council Members Excused/Absent**

Al Garavaglia	David Lieble	Tom Paquin
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**Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Staff Liaisons & Guests**

Tom Baird, Natural Resources Commission Chair  
Dave Anthony, Natural Resources Commissioner  
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  
Patrick Hanchin, Fisheries Division, Marquette  
Stacy Haughey, UP Field Deputy, Executive Division, Marquette  
Scott Lakosky, Forest Resources Division, Newberry  
Dave Lemmien, Wildlife Division, Sault Ste. Marie  
Kristie Sitar, Wildlife Division, Newberry  
Chad Stewart, Wildlife Division, Lansing  
Michelle Zellar, Facilities & Operations Division-Newberry

**Call to Order/Introductions**

The Eastern UP Citizens' Advisory Council meeting began at 6:02pm with **Ms. Stacy Haughey**, DNR UP Field Deputy, welcoming everyone to the virtual meeting. She provided housekeeping rules as well as an overview of the advisory role of the Upper Peninsula Citizens' Advisory Councils (East and West) and thanked Council members for their interests, passion, support, and dedication. She welcomed Natural Resources Commission Chair Tom Baird, Commissioner Dave Anthony, and Mr. Tom McNamee from Sen. McBroom's office to the meeting as well as additional guests who registered to attend.

**Chair Buckingham** welcomed everyone in attendance and asked Ms. Dahlstrom to read off the list of virtual attendees.

**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; Mr. Hass 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 minutes from both the August 4, 2022, EUPCAC and the October 11, 2022, Joint UPCAC meetings which were emailed to the Council previously; none were brought forth. **Vice Chair Gorniak motioned to approve both minutes as submitted; Mr. Wright supported the motion. Ayes: All. Nays: None. Absent: See listing on page 1. Motion carried.**

### **Chair Comments**

**Chair Buckingham** thanked Council members and DNR staff for their flexibility in changing to meet in a virtual format in light of the evening's winter storm, which alleviates travel and ensures everyone's safety.

### **Public Comments on Agenda Items**

**Chair Buckingham** opened the floor for public comments on agenda items only. There were no public comments pre-registered, and none were brought forth at this time.

### **DNR Reports from Division Staff**

Written staff reports were provided via email to Council members on December 8, 2022. The following were verbal additions to those reports:

1. **Stacy Haughey, UP Field Deputy:**

- Effective January 1, the Governor made some changes to her cabinet. She has asked DNR Director Dan Eichinger to serve as acting Director of EGLE. Deputy Director Shannon Lott will cover in an acting director role. Mr. Scott Whitcomb, currently the Director of Public Lands, will act as deputy director. Although a timeframe is not known, these roles are on a temporary basis.

2. **Michelle Zellar, Facilities & Operations Division:**

- In addition to the written report, additional information regarding the building of the new Newberry Customer Service Center, such as a detailed timeline and floor plans, are available with Ms. Dahlstrom if anyone is interested in reviewing them. Construction is expected to begin in the spring of 2023 and be completed in the fall of 2024.

3. **Patrick Hanchin, Fisheries Division:** No additions to the written report.

4. **Scott Lakosky, Forest Resources Division:**

- **Vice Chair Gorniak** asked about the distribution of timber sales revenue. **Mr. Lakosky** replied that a portion of the timber sale revenue is for the Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) and those revenues go to the US Forest Service who pays the DNR for their services in running the sale. The DNR payments stay within the Forest Resources Division to fund positions to conduct the work for those sales.
- **Vice Chair Gorniak** asked about the number of logs that are left onsite after a timber sale in a few areas. **Mr. Lakosky** stated those instances may be due to a logger leaving the sale temporarily to cut somewhere else to chase the markets with the intention to come back and pick up the logs. They generally don't leave logs behind.
- As a reminder, fuel wood permits are available. The permit allows for up to 5 cords of downed wood on state land. The program runs through December 31.

5. Lt. Skip Hagy, Law Enforcement Division:

- The need for an online orientation class for successful bear permit applicants was stressed. The number of spoiled bears officers encountered during the recent harvest season was a record and continues to increase each year. New bear hunters need to be educated on how to properly care for and process their harvest.
- Officers were very busy at the beginning of season and then tapered off later on.
- Officers from the most recent recruit school will be graduating on December 16. From this group of recruits, District 2 in the Eastern UP will not be receiving any new officers due to the need for them in other areas of the state. It is hoped the next recruit school will have some officers assigned to the Eastern UP. District 1 in the Western UP will receive three.
- **Chair Buckingham** indicated with his previous experience as a taxidermist, he knows the importance of properly and quickly handling a bear harvest. He noted he would be willing to help in any way he can.

1. Eric Cowing, Parks & Recreation Division:

- **Mr. Wright** asked if there is a specific contact in the Parks system to inquire about helping to remove invasive plant species in state parks. **Mr. Cowing** stated he will provide the stewardship person's contact information after the meeting. **Ms. Sitar** also mentioned the Chippewa Luce Mackinac Conservation District also has an invasive species program. **Mr. Wright** thanked her for the information and indicated he was specifically interested in helping at state parks, which requires permission.

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

- The Bissel Creek Culvert project indicated in the report has now been awarded. The project will begin in the spring.
- Snowmobile trail inspections are coming in and they look good. Some clubs are slightly behind, and a few issues came up; however, things should go well once there is enough snow to run the trails.

3. Dave Lemmien/Kristie Sitar, Wildlife Division:

- **Mr. Lemmien** reported the Wildlife Division currently has 2 vacancies within the UP Region, the Crystal Falls Biologist, and the Soo Wildlife Technician. Interviews will be completed in January and successful candidates should be starting in February/March. Once these 2 positions are filled, Wildlife Division's UP Region will be at full capacity.
- Staff are gearing up for the upcoming aerial moose survey in January. A lot of planning has taken place and pre-flights started this week. Planning and logistics are extensive, and if the weather cooperates, the plane will be in the air and staff can complete the survey.
- **Vice Chair Gorniak** asked if the deer harvest is a record low for the UP. He stated despite below average snow, supplemental feeding and good forestry habits, the herd still seems to be on a steady decline. **Ms. Haughey** noted Mr. Chad Stewart will be providing a harvest report later on in the agenda and may cover this item; **Chair Buckingham** agreed to defer a response until the later topic.
- **Ms. Sitar** stated she did not have anything to add to the written report; however, she shared how in-depth and detailed the snow data is that staff review each year. She noted after an extensive

review, she found the eastern UP had severe winters 8 of the last 10 years (not the worst, but severe). She explained the research that is done to obtain snow data. In the far eastern portion of Chippewa County, there is often less snow than the rest of the eastern UP. She also spoke about how aspen was harvested hard in the last 40 years, and it has been difficult to maintain what was harvested; aspen is a prime food source for deer. **Vice Chair Gorniak** stated he still feels the deer herd is low despite those reasons. Discussion ensued.

- **Chair Buckingham** added with the new mandatory harvest system in place, in 4-5 years, it should provide a clear picture on what is happening with the herd.

### **Old Business**

#### **1. Wolf Management Plan Approval Process Update from November NRC Meeting (Mr. Cody Norton):**

- **Ms. Haughey** indicated NRC Chair Tom Baird wished to address the Council to provide comments on this topic. She also noted that she will go through Mr. Norton's slides afterwards as Mr. Norton was unable to attend and the audio portion of his presentation from the West UPCAC meeting on December 5<sup>th</sup> is not working.
- **NRC Chair Baird** thanked the Council for inviting him to attend. He stated the wolf management plan was provided to the NRC a month ago with notification that it would be approved by the Director at the December NRC meeting, which it was approved. He noted there was some confusion that the NRC would be approving or disapproving the wolf management plan, and he clarified it is not the NRC's role to do so; it is a staff function. The NRC did receive it and briefly discussed what the next steps should be, in relation to the plan and related documentation, when wolves are no longer federally protected. He explained some ideas that were discussed with the Director and ultimately the goal will be—in the interim—utilizing the plan to be properly positioned to react on a timely basis. He can foresee the first item being the creation of an action plan or flowchart to assess the situation at the time when wolves are delisted. The second item will be continued data collection and analysis so that all the data is available when it comes time to consider the possibility of a hunt, trapping season, or both. The NRC is hoping to have an interim report at the beginning of the year from the DNR. He said he spoke to **Vice Chair Gorniak** last week and understands this situation is frustrating. However, they are doing their best to be in the best position they can be when wolves are delisted.
- **Vice Chair Gorniak** stated he appreciates the NRC's desire to move forward and believes it will be extremely helpful.
- **Chair Buckingham** thanked NRC Chair Baird for the overview, stating it gives residents of the eastern UP hope. He stated he and Mr. Dave Johnson from UPSA and the West UPCAC were at a meeting earlier this week where they had an opportunity to speak with Congressman Tom Tiffany who mentioned he was supportive of introducing bills to get the delisting process started and redefine the actual law. He stated perhaps with hope on multiple fronts, a change will be seen in this lifetime. **Vice Chair Gorniak** added Congressman Tiffany is going to be chair of the natural resources committee for the US House of Representatives.
- **Ms. Haughey** briefly went through the same wolf management plan presentation (slides) that Mr. Norton gave to the NRC at its November 10<sup>th</sup> meeting. The presentation reviewed the process the DNR utilizes to update the wolf management plan as well as provided an overview of the more significant changes that were made. The final draft updated plan was presented to the NRC and the Director in November and was approved by Director Eichinger at the December NRC meeting. **Ms. Haughey** stated if there are any questions, she will take them for Mr. Norton.

- For a full recap of the slides: November 10, 2022 NRC Meeting Wolf Management Plan Update, Pages 56-68. To view or read the entire updated draft wolf management plan: Updated Wolf Management Plan.
- **Vice Chair Gorniak** asked if the results of the wolf survey is available yet. He stated the survey was done in March and April of 2022 and results usually come out in June.
- **Mr. Lemmien** responded the survey results will be out in January. He explained the delays were related to prioritizing the completion of the wolf management plan as well as staff medical issues.

### **New Business**

#### **1. Mandatory Harvest Registration Season-to-Date Overview (Mr. Chad Stewart):**

- Overall, licensed hunter numbers, as of November 30, were down about 1.2% from last year. This is consistent with a steady decline that has been seen over the past 20+ years, and it is anticipated this decline will continue over the next 10+ years as many hunters start to age out of deer hunting. This is not a unique problem to Michigan.
- Staff are pleased with how the new mandatory harvest registration system has been performing thus far.
- As of 12/15/22, 82% of hunters who have reported their harvest spent less than 5 minutes doing so, which was a goal to reach to make sure hunters can get their reports in quickly.
- 91% of the reports received have been submitted within 72 hours. The focus was on education in lieu of enforcement this year.
- 87% of the reports received to date have come via the internet with the remaining reports coming from the online app.
- In terms of interpreting the data, all information stated here and on the website are considered “reported data” which will be different than what the actual harvest looks like. This is an important distinction to remember. There will be a certain percentage of individuals who have not reported their harvest.
- Of the data reported statewide as of 12/15/22, a little over 277,000 deer were harvested. Staff expect this number to cap around 300,000. On opening day statewide, over 45,000 deer were reported harvested that day alone.
- From a UP perspective, just over 22,300 deer were reported as harvested through 12/15/22. The actual harvest will be higher. Future years of reporting will provide a good indicator or predictor of what the final harvest looks like.
- The highest performing deer management unit (DMU) in terms of deer harvested in the UP is 055 with just over 5,000 deer reported, followed closely by DMU 022 with 2,700. The rest of the DMUs are around 1,000 or under.
- **Vice Chair Gorniak** stated he hears a lot of complaints from avid deer hunters that the deer herd is significantly low in the eastern UP and the trend is continuing at an alarming rate. He stated sportsmen are concerned and upset. He wishes there could be a discussion and a plan going forward on how to regenerate the herd. He noted the loss of hemlock as a contributing factor as well.
- **Chair Buckingham**, noting the 928 customers that entered the wrong license number, described his situation in which he also entered the wrong license number in the online harvest reporting system. He stated he contacted Ms. Dahlstrom who was able to assist in voiding the entry so that he could enter the correct number. It was an easy process. **Mr. Stewart** stated in future years, that number should decrease as customers become more familiar with the system.

- **Mr. Wright** noted the real-time reporting of harvest numbers in the new system was very nice and appreciated it being available. **Mr. Stewart** thanked Mr. Wright for the comments and stated many were involved in the creation of the system.
- **Mr. Dewitt** asked how many of those reporting harvested two or three deer in areas where they can. **Mr. Stewart** stated approximately 198,000 distinct individuals were successful and reported a harvest. In general, it is expected that 4-6% of individuals harvest two bucks. Those that hunt on a tribal license are not reported through the mandatory system.

2. Virtual Elk Hunt Orientation Request to NRC & Response (Ms. Haughey):

- **Ms. Haughey** indicated Dr. Smith from the West UPCAC submitted a letter to the NRC asking them to consider continuing the virtual option for elk hunt orientation in perpetuity. A virtual option had originally been offered during the pandemic. A copy of his letter was shared on screen, which provided a breakdown of travel hardships for those who live in the western UP to attend in-person orientations in lower Michigan.
- The NRC responded to Dr. Smith with an email stating, *"We have received an overall positive response from hunters and our staff since moving toward the virtual orientation several years ago. We have continued this approach this year while offering a voluntary in-person opportunity to meet during the day prior to each hunt so hunters can ask final questions and interact with agency biologists and staff before their hunt begins. While no long-term decision has been made on this virtual orientation, we have not heard any feedback to return to our previous format. I believe our virtual orientation will remain for the foreseeable future. If you have additional questions, please contact Mr. Chad Stewart, Deer, Elk, and Moose Management Specialist, Wildlife Division, at stewartc6@michigan.gov."*

3. Council Member Term Expirations/Renewals/Solicitation of New Applicants (Ms. Haughey):

- **Ms. Haughey** reviewed a listing of members who have departed over the year and those members whose terms will be up for renewal at the end of December. 4 openings currently exist on the Council. There are also 6 openings on the West UPCAC.
- A press release soliciting applications for those openings was issued in November with a due date of December 15. Multiple news sources picked up the release and targeted emails were sent. The Council was encouraged to reach out to their connections to solicit interest.
- A selection team of four UP representatives and four DNR staff will review applications in January and choose new members based on areas of under-representation currently on the Councils, such as UP counties, interests, demographics, etc. After a vetting process, new members should be on board in March and April. **Ms. Dahlstrom** noted 4 applications have been received to date. **Ms. Haughey** stated an orientation is held with new members as well.
- **Ms. Haughey** also thanked Council members and DNR staff for their participation in the MSU-facilitated sessions for CAC planning. The draft plan has just been received, and she will be discussing it internally with division chiefs and then it will be shared with the Councils.

4. Motion to Defer Officer Elections to April 2023 Meeting (Ms. Haughey/Chair Buckingham):

- **Ms. Haughey** stated per bylaws, the Council votes on officer selections at the first meeting of the new year, which is February. She noted that since at least a third of the Council will be new members by March/April, she suggested to the Council that they defer officer selections until the April 2023 meeting.
- **Chair Buckingham** asked for a motion from the Council if they wish to proceed with Ms. Haughey's suggestion. **Mr. Cox motioned to defer officer selection until the April meeting;**

**Secretary Thomas supported the motion. Ayes: All. Nays: None. Absent: See page 1. No further discussion. Motion carried.**

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

### **Subcommittee Reports**

1. Fisheries Subcommittee Report (Vice Chair Gorniak):

- 4,603 walleyes were planted in Brevoort Lake and a creel clerk will be stationed at that lake in January to collect data from fishermen. Although fall walleye fingerlings are more costly, it is believed the fish are more successful. It is hopeful the creek clerk's data will prove that.
- **Ms. Haughey** stated she wanted to mention earlier about the pilot initiative through the DNR's Parks and Recreation Division to keep several boating access sites plowed during the winter to aid ice anglers. Partnerships have been secured with various townships, county road commissions and others to keep areas plowed. It will continue this year, and after partnerships are re-verified, a press release will be issued.

2. Policy Impact Subcommittee Report (Mr. Hass):

- There are no items currently before the committee. If there are any items Council members would like the subcommittee to review, please let **Mr. Hass** know.
- **Secretary Thomas** suggested since there is a new Acting Director starting January 1, perhaps it would be helpful to review the last 10 previous resolutions and let the Director know the group is informed and active. **Mr. Hass** stated he would be willing to do so, but perhaps Ms. Haughey will be briefing her on them. **Secretary Thomas motioned to inform the new Acting Director of the last 10 EUPCAC resolutions; Mr. Kangas supported the motion.** Discussion on the motion. **Chair Buckingham** noted the last 10 resolutions may no longer be relevant or have been dealt with; **Secretary Thomas** agreed. **Ms. Haughey** added that resolutions passed by both Councils are shared with the DNR's management team, including the Director and Deputy Director, and they are aware of them. She stated Acting Deputy Lott has been with the DNR for over 20 years and she is aware of the Council's past initiatives. After much discussion regarding resubmitting resolutions for action or just for information; it was clarified that **Mr. Hass** will assist in providing a historical presentation of past resolutions and will draft a letter with Ms. Haughey's assistance that will impress upon the Acting Director that the Council is active and pertinent. **Chair Buckingham called for a vote on the motion. Ayes: All. Nays: 1. Absent: See page 1. Motion carried by majority.**

### **Next Meeting**

1. Approval of 2023 Meeting Dates:

- **Ms. Haughey** indicated meeting dates for the entire year have not yet been determined. However, a suggested date for the next meeting is Wednesday, February 15<sup>th</sup> in a virtual format. The consensus of the Council is to meet in person. More information regarding future meeting dates will be communicated after the holidays.

2. Next EUPCAC Meeting: **Chair Buckingham** indicated the next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 15<sup>th</sup>, beginning at 6:00pm.

3. Items for Next Meeting Agenda: **Chair Buckingham** noted topics or issues for the next regular EUPCAC agenda can be sent to him, Ms. Haughey, or Ms. Dahlstrom. He stated wolf management

should remain as a recurrent agenda item. **Vice Chair Gorniak** suggested a review of the DNR budget would be helpful to learn about. **Secretary Thomas** stated it would also be helpful to see handouts prior to a budget presentation to prepare questions ahead of time. **Ms. Haughey** stated there have been budget presentations in the past, but it has been quite a while and they are typically done at a joint UPCAC meeting to benefit both Councils. She will look into arrangements for a future meeting.

#### **Public Comments (Any Topic)**

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

1. *Mr. David Cords of Paradise:* Mr. Cords spoke about the dismal state of deer hunting in Chippewa County. He sat out for 10 days and didn't hear many shots. He did see some adult does but did not harvest a deer this season. He also seen a resurgence of small animals this year including a pine marten. The town of Paradise was dead during deer season, which is not normal. He believes something needs to be done to increase the deer herd. He also spoke about the tribal consent decree. He stated he is disappointed to learn of new gill net recommendations that will impact sportfishing. He also indicated his disagreement with not being able to serve on the Council because his primary residence is not in the UP, even though he spends a great deal of time at his camp in Paradise.
  - **Vice Chair Gorniak** asked Mr. Cords if he takes part in the deer camp survey. Mr. Cords stated he has never received one but would be happy to participate. **Vice Chair Gorniak** will reach out to him with information on how to participate.
  - **Mr. Hanchin** clarified the tribal consent decree document that was made public, and that Mr. Cords referred to, is not in effect. The current agreement, known as the 2000 Consent Decree, remains in effect and a judge has ruled that it will remain in effect until a new agreement is reached. Because of current litigation, it is possible that the new agreement that was made public will not be in effect for days, months, or possibly even years. Comments can be given to the DNR's Tribal Coordination Unit, and he can provide that information to those who would like it. **Ms. Haughey** thanked **Mr. Hanchin** for that important clarification.

#### **Closing Comments from the Council**

**Chair Buckingham** opened the floor for closing comments from the Council and DNR staff; no further comments were made.

#### **Adjourn**

There being no further business, **Chair Buckingham** thanked everyone for attending. He adjourned the meeting at 7:46pm Eastern.