

Eastern Upper Peninsula Citizen Advisory Council (EUPCAC)
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, February 19, 2020
6:00-8:30pm Eastern
LMAS Health Department Conference Room, Newberry

Chair: Tom Buckingham Vice-Chair: Gary Gorniak Secretary: Allan Augustyn

Council Members Present

Kristy Beyer	Gary Gorniak	Tom Paquin
Tom Buckingham	Tim Hass	Mark Spencer
Ken Collier	Bernie Hubbard	Tony Wright
Jeff Cox	Travis Kangas	
Grant Dewitt	Glenn Moll	

Council Members Excused/Absent

Allan Augustyn	Al Garavaglia
Jim Duke	Angel Portice

Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Staff Liaisons

Kristi Dahlstrom, Executive Assistant, Marquette
Acting Lt. Mike Mshar, Law Enforcement Division, Newberry
Paul Gaberdiel, Parks & Recreation Division-Trails, Newberry
Stacy Haughey, UP Regional Coordinator, Marquette
Cory Kovacs, Fisheries Division, Newberry
Kristie Sitar, Wildlife Division, Newberry
Sgt. Calvin Smith, Law Enforcement Division, Newberry
Jon Spieles, Marketing & Outreach Division, Newberry
Keith Magnusson, Forest Resources Division, Newberry

Call to Order/Current Council Member Introductions

The Eastern Upper Peninsula Citizen Advisory Council (EUPCAC) meeting was called to order at 6:03 pm Eastern by **Chair Buckingham**. He welcomed everyone to the meeting. Council members 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. Moll motioned to adopt the agenda as presented; Mr. Paquin 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 December 10, 2019 EUPCAC meeting minutes, which were emailed to the Council previously. **Mr. Hass motioned to approve the minutes as submitted; Mr. Cox supported the motion. Ayes: All. Nays: None. Absent: See listing on page 1. Motion carried.**

Chair Comments

Chair Buckingham asked for a moment of remembrance for Mr. Phil Wirtanen, Chairman of the WUPCAC, who recently passed away. **Ms. Haughey** spoke of Chair Wirtanen's work on the WUPCAC and displayed pictures of him during his years on the Council. She stated he will be greatly missed.

DNR Reports from Division Staff

Written staff reports were provided via email to Council members on February 12, 2020. The following were verbal additions to those reports:

1. **Stacy Haughey, UP Regional Coordinator:** **Ms. Haughey** mentioned Director Eichinger visited the UP last weekend for the UP 200 event and legislative receptions in Marquette, the UP Sportsman's Alliance meeting in Iron Mountain, and the UP Whitetails of Marquette County banquet in Marquette. She noted Mr. Terry Minzey, UP wildlife supervisor, has announced his retirement on March 21, 2020 and a national search for the Wildlife Division chief position is currently underway.

Ms. Haughey acknowledged the meeting held in Newberry last week regarding wolves with coverage in the Newberry News. She indicated the EUPCAC has been discussing the wolf delisting issue for the past 11 years at Council meetings, predominately held in Newberry, and she found it surprising those individuals didn't attend the Council meeting to voice their concerns. The wolf issue and any decisions on the delisting will occur on the federal level and not with the Michigan DNR. No changes will occur until the federal government makes a change. Comments, questions, and concerns should be addressed to the US Fish & Wildlife Service. She compared the issue to the cormorant problem, which is a federal issue and Mr. Gorniak has been working diligently with the federal legislators and process to get it resolved. **Ms. Sitar** added there were about 75 people in attendance with a lot of wolf comments that lasted a couple of hours. **Chair Buckingham** stated he attended the meeting and folks were angry with the federal government and the Michigan DNR over the issue. He added that he was visited by the owner of the property where the meeting was held and encouraged him and his neighbors to attend the Council meeting and he would make sure public comment time was available to them. **Ms. Haughey** thanked him for the effort and reiterated that the Council meetings are held to hear issues affecting the public and to encourage those with questions to come to the meetings. Staff from all divisions are represented at these meetings to provide answers and clarification on a variety of topics.

Mr. Gorniak stated he feels the current wolf management plan is inadequate and may be part of the discontent. He indicated the current plan only includes a wolf harvest for conflict management and not for population management. It also does not include any of the effects wolves have on deer and other wildlife in the UP. It was noted the NRC has the authority to set a season, not the staff. **Ms. Haughey** indicated a hunt did occur when wolves were delisted for a short while. Discussion ensued. **Mr. Hass** stated staff may not be able to spend taxpayer monies on revising a wolf management plan when they aren't delisted. **Mr. Gorniak** disagreed, stating every expense put into the management plan was paid for by hunters and fisherman. **Ms. Haughey** suggested having this topic, including

budget and authority on the agenda at the next meeting. **Mr. Wright** stated perhaps the impacts of wolf densities could be included in the plan. **Chair Buckingham** stated there is a critical, regional problem in the UP with wolves and they are affecting property values, deer hunting, etc. The management plan is written as a statewide plan and it needs to be rewritten as a regional plan as there are no issues in the lower peninsula. He noted the anger from local residents needs to be redirected to the feds rather than the DNR and more education may be needed. **Mr. Gorniak** stated a conversation was started with Rep. Jack Bergman at the UP Sportsman's Alliance meeting on February 15 and he will be sending more information to him in the hopes to stir more interest. **Ms. Haughey** indicated this will become a standing agenda item for future meetings.

2. *Cory Kovacs, Fisheries Division:* **Mr. Kovacs** indicated there are a few vacancies in the district and he is covering for one of them. The Coffee and Conversations public sessions with the Fisheries Division will be held on March 31 (Newberry), April 2 (Munising), and April 6 (Sault Ste. Marie). Times and locations were listed in the division reports. He provided an update on ice fishing conditions on lakes in the area. He also added that Mr. Phil Schneeberger, Lake Superior Basin Coordinator, recently retired and Mr. Patrick Hanchin will assume this role next week. **Mr. Gorniak** asked how he can receive results from a survey he did with one of the former employees; **Mr. Kovacs** stated he can provide him a copy.
3. *Keith Magnusson, Forest Resources Division:* **Mr. Magnusson** indicated he continues in an acting role which began last May. He stated timber sales for low ground wood or hardwood pulp have been struggling with several no bid sales due to weather conditions. Weather extensions at no cost will be offered. He reported the division is working with the Mackinac County Road Commission on a new bonding policy for road restrictions. Resolutions are being made to reduce the cost for loggers and is a work in progress. He noted the east UP planner position was filled and 3 forester and technician positions will hopefully be filled next month. **Mr. Moll** had a few questions on information listed in the division report; **Mr. Magnusson** responded. **Mr. Kangas** asked if the timber mats that are utilized on state land could be rented out for private land use. **Mr. Magnusson** stated what they have are being used and they are looking to purchase more. **Mr. Kangas** asked if there has been an increase in timber sales going past their due date and being returned to the state. **Mr. Magnusson** replied yes this is occurring; however, sales can be extended for up to three additional years. The wood needs to be harvested, but loggers are struggling with low ground work.
4. *Paul Gaberdiel, Parks and Recreation Division-Eastern UP Trails Section:* **Mr. Gaberdiel** reported after late snow arrival and then rough conditions with ice, there is now plenty of snow and trails are in good condition. He provided an update on the late year storms which impacted almost all of the trails in the eastern UP and many were closed. Four DNR crews and several DNR grant sponsors were out for three weeks getting trails opened up with dozers for big tree work and many other types of equipment. Everyone did a great job in a very short amount of time. He noted the Haywire Grade, recently named a Pure Michigan Trail, will be celebrating its 50th anniversary with a snowmobile event on February 29th, an

equine event on June 6th, a bicycle event on August 22nd, and an ORV event on October 23rd. **Mr. Moll** asked if snowmobile trail grant sponsors get paid based on miles for grooming and if they receive extra funding for the clean up that was mentioned. **Mr. Gaberdiel** stated they cannot reimburse for personnel time but can for equipment rental. **Mr. Moll** asked if license fees will need to increase for the additional ORV maintenance needed with the increase in forest road designations. **Mr. Gaberdiel** stated fees may need an increase at some point to cover the increased mileage and maintenance needed. The snowmobile and ORV programs are looking to see if they can share equipment, but it's a work in progress. **Mr. Hass** asked if there is reimbursement for maintenance on North Country Trails; **Mr. Gaberdiel** stated not that he's aware of. **Mr. Cox** mentioned that Pure Michigan was not funded (relating to the Pure Michigan Trail designation mentioned earlier). **Ms. Beyer** responded it still exists, but the advertising component was not funded. **Mr. Gaberdiel** mentioned the Ride Right safety campaign developed placemats and he has distributed them to seven locations last week and will do four more this week. **Mr. Paquin** stated he seen a Ride Right billboard on his way to the meeting from St. Ignace.

5. Acting Lt. Mike Mshar, Law Enforcement Division: **Acting Lt. Mshar** introduced himself stating he is the current acting lieutenant while Lt. Skip Hagy is out on medical leave. He also introduced Sgt. Calvin Smith in attendance. He stated officers are enforcing the Ride Right campaign as well as conducting sound enforcement and checking ice fishermen. He explained the realignment occurring in the division and noted another academy will be held in July as there have been several retirements creating vacancies. It was asked how many snowmobile fatalities have occurred. **Acting Lt. Mshar** stated there have been two in the eastern UP (Chippewa & Mackinac Counties) and there has been four in the western UP to date. He stated riding has gotten very aggressive. It was asked what the speed limit is for snowmobiles; **Acting Lt. Mshar** stated what is safe and prudently reasonable. Operators can be cited for careless operation.
6. Jon Spieles, Marking & Outreach Division: **Mr. Spieles** indicated he did not have anything to add to his division report.
7. Eric Cowing, Parks & Recreation Division: **Mr. Cowing** highlighted a few recent winter events at Muskallonge, Straits, and Tahquamenon Falls State Parks which all had good attendance. He also noted six vacancies in the district (eastern UP) and indicated through division collaboration, they were able to raise the summer staff pay rates to be more competitive due to several vacancies left unfilled last summer. He spoke about the high water levels causing several projects to be pushed forward and some minor projects being shelved in order to prioritize the projects and funding. **Mr. Moll** asked a question about a notation in the division reports; **Mr. Cowing** explained. **Mr. Dewitt** asked if the winter events need a recreation passport; **Mr. Cowing** stated yes.
8. Kristie Sitar, Wildlife Division: **Chair Buckingham** recognized Ms. Sitar for her professionalism at the wolf meeting last week in Newberry, indicating she handled the large group very well. **Ms. Sitar** thanked him. She stated staff are currently working on the wolf survey, which is done every other year. No details or statistics are available yet as the

survey will continue as long as there is snow on the ground. She indicated staff receive snow depth estimates on a weekly basis and up until last week, current conditions were very far above the snow average. However, last week snow depth was the same as last year. **Mr. Gorniak** asked if there was any idea on the deer kill rates this winter. **Ms. Sitar** according to all the surveys, deer came out of winter better in 2019 than in 2018, yet deer harvest numbers were down. The winter of 2017 was a lot easier than 2018, which helps. Fawn numbers were very low last year with winter having an impact. She stated staff were recently shown a graph that correlates buck harvest with snow depth, and it shows a poor buck harvest after a bad winter. She noted the fawn to doe ratio did drop this last season. **Mr. Gorniak** indicated he's been following the predator prey program. **Mr. Wright** asked what is considered a fawn (deer age). **Ms. Sitar** explained that a deer born last June is still considered a fawn until next June (a year old or less). **Mr. Spencer** indicated he hadn't received the fisher/marten survey yet as he normally receives it in January; **Ms. Sitar** stated she will look into it for him.

Old Business

1. **Chronic Wasting Disease Updates:** **Ms. Haughey** stated this is a standing topic for the Council. There is no new information or cases to report this month. She noted at the UP Sportsman's Alliance (UPSA) meeting on February 15th, CWD was discussed as it related to animals ingesting the prion through plants and other items they feed on. She indicated when Dr. Straka, DNR veterinarian, attended a previous UPSA meeting, she addressed those questions stating there is some research in that area, but transmission is far greater by other avenues, such as transportation of carcasses and feeding. **Mr. Gorniak** asked about the total number of infected deer to date; **Ms. Sitar** stated there has been 182 positive cases as of February 7, 2020, and there has been no new cases in the UP. **Mr. Moll** stated it seems like the number of new cases has plateaued in mid-Michigan as he hasn't seen as many bulletins about new cases. **Ms. Haughey** stated there has been new cases in lower Michigan, although only new townships and not new counties. **Mr. Spieles** stated he was at a presentation with Dr. Straka and she reminded folks that the DNR tested 20,000+ deer this year, compared to 30,000+ deer last year, so statistically there were fewer positives and to not make a direct correlation. He said she indicated testing is not being done as heavily in areas where it's already known to be an issue. **Ms. Haughey** noted there was a general fund appropriate for research work, and Michigan has tested more animals than any other state in the US. Other states have visited the lab to see their processes in order to duplicate practices. **Mr. Cox** asked if there is any trend on bucks versus does in the 182 cases and if a doe can pass the disease on to her fawns. **Ms. Sitar** stated she doesn't have the breakdown on bucks verses does, and yes, does can pass it to their fawns. It was asked if symptoms appear in 2-3 years; **Ms. Haughey** stated symptoms may never appear, and it could take awhile to see characteristics. It was asked how many of the 182 positive cases were detected in 2019; **Ms. Sitar** stated 65. **Mr. Gorniak** asked if it was known how many positive cases have been identified in Wisconsin; **Ms. Haughey** stated she will find those stats for the next meeting.
2. **Council Member Vacancy Update:** **Ms. Haughey** thanked the Council members for their recruitment efforts indicating several applications have been received for the three open

positions. **Ms. Dahlstrom** noted to date, seven applications have been received and two have been mailed out and have not been returned yet. She provided a breakdown summary of those seven, indicating county of residence and group association. Applications will be received until February 28th. The CAC selection committee, comprised of 4 public stakeholders and 4 staff, will convene in March to review the applications and choose new members. It is anticipated the new members will be on board by the next EUPCAC meeting in April.

New Business

1. **Eastern UP Trails Update:** **Mr. Gaberdiel** indicated he covered the update in his verbal division report earlier as he needed to depart the meeting early.

2. **2019 UP Deer Camp Survey Results:** **Ms. Sitar** provided a review of the results in a presentation.
 - Background: The results are based on hunter contributed data during firearm season only and analyzed by DNR staff both from a regional and DMU perspective. Results are emailed back out to contributors.
 - Survey Form: An example of the survey form was shown.
 - Reverse Side of Survey Form: The reverse side was shown, indicating a line for each hunter in the camp to record what they see every day and also what they harvest.
 - Map of UP: Each dot shown on the UP map represented at least one deer camp by DMU.
 - Participation: Shown by the number of hunters and the number of camps participating in the survey. Participation steadily increased up to 2011 and then has declined slowly since then. The number of camps participating has remained fairly stable.
 - UP Summary 2012-2019: Includes the number of camps and hunters, percent of hunters harvesting a buck, deer observed per hunter day, fawns observed per 100 does, does per buck observed on opening day and a rating of the deer season. In 2019, 26% harvested a buck compared to 33% in 2018 and rating of the deer season was 30% (good-excellent) and 70% (fair-poor) in 2019 compared with 52% (good-excellent) and 48% (fair-poor) in 2018.
 - Eastern UP Results: By DMUs 48, 349, 249, 17, and 117.
 - Observation Rates in the EUP: Rates fell slightly to just under 3 per hunter day. Still above average, however, it did decline slightly from 2018.
 - EUP Buck Hunter Success: 21% in 2019 compared to 31% in 2018.
 - EUP Fawns per 100 Does: 41 in 2019 and 48 in 2018. 2019 was below average of 50.
 - EUP Deer Trend & Season Rating: Deer herd trend compared to last year (split in half) and rating of the firearm season (56% fair-good-excellent).
 - EUP Herd Trend: Percentage of east UP camps rating “more deer” than the previous year. 2019 was 16% compared to 41% in 2018.
 - EUP Season Ratings: Percentage of east UP camps rating the season as “good to excellent”. 2019 was 26% compared to 49% in 2018.
 - Camp Participation: Shown by DMU. The most participation was in DMU 17. Several clubs offer a prize for survey participation and this could be why this DMU is higher.

Anyone can sign up to receive a survey. **Chair Buckingham** asked about the survey response rate; **Ms. Sitar** stated response rate is very good.

- Deer Observation Rates: Deer seen per hunter day by DMU.
- Buck Hunter Success: Shown by DMU.
- Fawns Seen per 100 Does: Shown by DMU.
- Furbearer Sightings Across the Entire UP: Sightings include coyotes, wolves, fisher, marten, bobcat and fox.
- Furbearer Sightings on 3 Main Animals: Historical from 2003-2019 for coyotes, wolves and bobcats. It does not show population levels, only sightings.
- 2019 Deer Camp Survey Summary: Most rates decreased in 2019. 2019 UP regional rates were near average since 2012 with some variation by DMU.
- How to Become Involved in the Survey: Hunters from DMUs with lighter participation are encouraged to sign up. A survey form will be sent prior to season.
- Bucks Checked at Main Deer Check Stations: This includes Sault, Newberry, Cusino, Marquette, Escanaba, Baraga, and Crystal Falls from Nov 15-30. There was a slight decrease in 2019 from 2018.
- Age Class Distribution: Age structure of bucks checked in the UP in all seasons. In 2019, 38% were 3.5 years old, 49% was 2.5 years old and 14% was 1.5 years old. To compare, in 2018, 33% were 3.5 years old, 52% was 2.5 years old and 16% were 1.5 years old.

The Council thanked Ms. Sitar for the information.

3. UP Deer Harvest Comparison: As requested at the last meeting in December by Chair Buckingham, **Ms. Sitar** presented a UP-wide deer harvest graph from 1985 to 2018 including both bucks and antlerless deer, which has shown a decrease in harvest overall, with a few uptick years mixed in. She indicated this data came from harvest data from a mailed survey and not the camp survey data previously presented. She stated several changes occurred in this timeframe all of which had an effect on the harvest numbers: combo tag with antler point restrictions in 2008-2009, no antlerless during bow season in 2015, CWD found in 2008, changing license structure, baiting rules, winters, to name a few. She reviewed severe and moderate winters during this timeframe. 12 were severe: 1995-1996, 2000-2001, 2004, 2007-2008, 2012-2014, 2017-2018 and 4 were moderate. She mentioned the wolf population, with the first breeding occurring in 1991, increased steadily until 8 years ago and has been stable for the last 8 years. The coyote population may have also been a factor. **Chair Buckingham** asked when baiting changed during this timeframe. It was stated that 2000 was the last year of the 5-gallon rule and in the 1980's it was unlimited baiting. It was also noted that mills were cutting in this timeframe as well. **Ms. Sitar** stated there have been so many variables during this vast time period and multiple factors have contributed, not just one. **Mr. Kovacs** stated it would be curious to see the chart overlaid with the known decrease in license sales, which is also a contributing factor. **Ms. Beyer** indicated she would like to see information for Drummond Island specifically since it's just one DMU. **Ms. Sitar** stated information is available in the Deer Camp Survey for that DMU. **Chair Buckingham** thanked Ms. Sitar for the effort and information.
4. New DNR License Sales System: **Ms. Haughey** reported the new retail license sales system in the state rolled out this past weekend. She indicated staff are very excited about the

updated features and customers will hopefully notice the vast improvements such as auto renewal and scanning license information. The Marquette DNR Office was a test site and there were several press releases submitted to the public. Good planning took place in choosing the right weekend to implement system, even extending the free fishing weekend one additional day. However, she said when the system went online, there were difficulties in the UP where several retailers and DNR offices were not functioning properly due to firewall issues. The tech staff are working on it and interim solutions have been implemented. Law enforcement officers are well aware of the issues as well. She stated all license capabilities are still available online. **Mr. Moll** asked since drivers licenses are now scanned in, will ORV stickers be tied to the purchaser. **Ms. Haughey** stated she did not know the answer but will find out.

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

Subcommittee Reports

1. Firewood Movement Subcommittee Report: Further reports are on hold until the DNR's policy is put into effect and can be evaluated after a season of use.
2. Fisheries Subcommittee Report: **Mr. Gorniak** noted the comment period on cormorants is currently open. He has emailed the link to everyone. He stated he is disappointed in the results, indicating it shows only 450 comments nationwide so far. He encouraged everyone to make a comment, including fish biologists.
3. Policy Impact Subcommittee Report: **Mr. Hass** reported there is no report as no items have been brought forth to review.

Next Meeting

1. Next EUPCAC Meeting: **Chair Buckingham** indicated the next regular meeting of the EUPCAC will be on Wednesday, April 22nd at the LMAS Health Department Conference Room in Newberry beginning at 6:00pm.
2. Items for Next Meeting Agenda: **Chair Buckingham** indicated if there are any items of interest to place on the next agenda to please email them to him, Ms. Haughey or Ms. Dahlstrom.

Public Comments

Chair Buckingham opened the floor for additional public comments.

1. **Mr. Stephen King of Newberry** asked about the status of the commercial fishing bills and the treaty negotiations and spoke about Canadian regulations on the Great Lakes. **Mr. Gorniak** noted aquaculture is legal in Canada and a lot of fish come from those pens, although not all of them **Mr. King** said. **Mr. Kovacs** stated negotiation meetings are being held weekly as the sunset is August 2020. There are no details to report. He added the commercial fishing bills are tied up in the legislature.
2. **Mr. Kip Cameron of Newberry** asked if brain worm is killing the moose population in the eastern UP. **Ms. Sitar** stated the DNR does not monitor the moose population in the

eastern UP closely as they are not part of the survey every other year which is held in the western UP where the population is much greater. There was a sighting system in place, but it was not used much. She stated moose don't migrate like deer and do well in deep snow and cold winters. She stated brain worm is not found as the cause of moose demise in the UP. Mr. Cameron stated a lot of people come to Newberry to see moose. **Ms. Sitar** stated it is unfortunate that the area self-proclaimed itself as a moose capital, but there is a very low moose population in the eastern UP making observing one extremely difficult. **Ms. Haughey** indicated local officials had requested increased advertising for such in the past.

Closing Comments from the Council

Chair Buckingham opened the floor for closing comments from the Council.

1. **Mr. Gorniak** again encouraged everyone to submit comments on the cormorant issue.
2. **Mr. Spencer** stated he attended the last few NRC meetings as there has been a group speaking during the public comment period on the need to eliminate predator hunts. He suggested comments should be sent to NRC on why they are needed. He stated he will be attending all NRC meetings to comment they are needed and why. This same group is also trying to eliminate fishing tournaments.

Adjourn

There being no further business, **Chair Buckingham** thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the meeting at 8:15pm Eastern.

Approved 6/19/20