

Eastern Upper Peninsula Citizen Advisory Council (EUPCAC)
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday February 9, 2021
6:00-8:30pm Eastern
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Chair: Tom Buckingham Vice-Chair: Gary Gorniak Secretary: Open

Council Members Present

Kristy Beyer	Gary Gorniak	Mark Spencer
Tom Buckingham	Tim Hass	Jack Thomas
Ken Collier	Bernie Hubbard	Tony Wright
Jeff Cox	Travis Kangas	
Kevin Erickson	Tom Paquin	

Council Members Excused/Absent

Grant Dewitt	AJ Downey	Al Garavaglia
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Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Staff Liaisons & Guests

Don Brown, Wildlife Division, Shingleton
Kristi Dahlstrom, Executive Division, Marquette
Patrick Hanchin, Fisheries Division, Marquette
Stacy Haughey, UP Field Deputy, Executive Division, Marquette
Dan Heckman, Forest Resources Division, Gaylord
Dan Kennedy, Wildlife Division, Lansing
Ken Kesson, Wildlife Division, Lansing
Cory Kovacs, Fisheries Division, Newberry
Eric Cowing, Parks & Recreation Division, Newberry
Tom Seablom, Forest Resources Division, Marquette
Lt. Skip Hagy, Law Enforcement Division, Newberry
Jon Spieles, Marketing & Outreach Division, Newberry

Call to Order/Current Council Member Introductions

The Eastern Upper Peninsula Citizen Advisory Council (EUPCAC) meeting began with a welcome by **Ms. Haughey**, DNR UP Field Deputy. She introduced herself and thanked Council members, DNR staff and guests for joining the meeting. She indicated the meeting will be guided with a powerpoint presentation and asked those attending to review a slide with virtual meeting tips. She then provided an overview of the Upper Peninsula Citizens' Advisory Councils (East and West), which are advisory groups to the DNR, and referenced the Council's website at www.michigan.gov/upcac for more information. She displayed a listing of guests who registered to attend the meeting and welcomed them.

Chair Buckingham also welcomed everyone in attendance (33 total) and officially called the meeting to order at 6:03pm. He asked Council members to introduce themselves on screen. Afterwards, he began the meeting with the adoption of the agenda.

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. Cox 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 16, 2020 EUPCAC meeting minutes, which were emailed to the Council previously; none were brought forth. **Vice Chair Gorniak motioned to approve the minutes as submitted; Ms. Beyer supported the motion. Ayes: All. Nays: None. Absent: See listing on page 1. Motion carried.**

Chair Comments

Chair Buckingham stated it has been an interesting few weeks since the last meeting in which the focus was an in-depth discussion on wolves. He indicated he has received several phone calls and has seen a lot of social media comments. He hopes that the DNR and NRC is listening to the critical nature of the situation in the eastern UP and it can be worked through as a group.

Public Comments

Chair Buckingham indicated one individual signed up for public comment; however, because he has not signed on yet to the meeting, he will entertain his public comment at the second opportunity later on in the agenda.

DNR Reports from Division Staff

Written staff reports were provided via email to Council members on February 2, 2021. The following were verbal additions to those reports:

1. Stacy Haughey, UP Field Deputy: **Ms. Haughey** mentioned the Senate did not approve two proposed appointees for the Natural Resources Commission and it is likely there will be a future announcement for additional appointees.
2. Cory Kovacs, Fisheries Division: **Mr. Kovacs** indicated he has received questions regarding musky spearing and musky registrations in general. He stated ice conditions across the state are good due to recent cold weather, resulting in 39 muskies being registered so far this season. This is 11 more than the two previous seasons. He noted the Black Lake sturgeon spearing season lasted a little over two and a half hours, with 7 fish harvested, which was the actual allocation. Fisheries Division and Law Enforcement Division staff did an outstanding job of getting fish reported.
3. Tom Seablom, Forest Resources Division: **Mr. Seablom** stated Mr. Jeff Stampfly who used to be the eastern UP supervisor for the Forest Resources Division and attend these meetings, was previously promoted to assistant chief and now after an acting role for the last nine months has been appointed as chief. He also mentioned the division is moving forward on filling several critical vacancies now that the hiring freeze has been lifted, and no cost fuel permits will be available again this year with a press release being issued soon with details.
4. Lt. Skip Hagy, Law Enforcement Division: **Lt. Hagy** reported the snow and cold weather has brought snowmobilers in large numbers and with that, unfortunately, comes an increase in accidents, some of which are severe and even fatal. He agreed with Mr. Kovacs in saying ice fishing has been good and officers have been seeing lots of folks out enjoying it.
5. John Spieles, Marketing & Outreach Division: **Mr. Spieles** spoke about the recent Nature Center Summit that was held, which is an opportunity to reach out and provide communication and messaging to nature center administrators, zoos, and educational institutions around the state. There

are 83 nature centers around Michigan. The program was held virtually with 370 registered participants for presentations from 8 different speakers on bird conservation, food changes in the Great Lakes, aquatic invasive species, bats, wolves, etc. A program like this could equate to tens of thousands of messages getting to school kids.

6. Eric Cowing, Parks & Recreation Division: **Mr. Cowing** reported reservation numbers for this summer's state park camping season were just released. In comparison with January of last year, reservations are up 34%. The increase in business last summer looks like it will continue into 2021.
7. Don Brown, Wildlife Division: **Mr. Brown** introduced himself as a wildlife technician from the Shingleton office and indicated he did not have any additions to what was included in his written report.

Annual Election of Officers

Chair Buckingham noted the Bylaws require the Council to have a yearly officer election, which traditionally occurs at the first meeting of the year. He turned the floor over to Ms. Haughey to conduct the election; **Ms. Haughey** opened the floor for nominations for 2021:

1. Chairman: **Mr. Gorniak** nominated Mr. Buckingham; **Mr. Buckingham** accepted the nomination. After three more opportunities, no additional nominations were brought forth.
2. Vice Chairman: **Mr. Buckingham** nominated Mr. Gorniak; **Mr. Gorniak** accepted the nomination. After three more opportunities, no additional nominations were brought forth.
3. Secretary: **Mr. Buckingham** nominated Mr. Thomas; **Mr. Thomas** accepted the nomination. After three more opportunities, no additional nominations were brought forth.
4. Vote: **Mr. Cox** motioned to close the nominations for all three officer positions; **Mr. Paquin** supported the motion. A vote was conducted by an online Zoom poll visible to all in attendance. **Ayes: All. Nays: None. Absent: See listing on page 1. Motion carried unanimously.**
5. Final Results: **For 2021, Mr. Buckingham and Mr. Gorniak remain as Chairman and Vice Chairman, respectively, and Mr. Thomas is the new Secretary.**

Old Business

1. Chronic Wasting Disease Updates: **Ms. Haughey** stated this is a standing agenda item at the request of the Council. She indicated weekly surveillance updates are provided to staff; she displayed on screen the latest information dated 2/5/2021. She noted a total of 403 deer have been tested in the UP CWD core surveillance zone for 2020 and no additional positives have been found to date. **Vice Chair Gorniak** asked if the number of tests done were well below what was required; **Ms. Haughey** replied the goal was 1,927 and the previous year's goal was also not met. With limited check station interaction because of the pandemic this past season, the number of deer brought in for testing was predicted to be reduced. It is hoped an increase will be seen in the number of tests conducted in 2021.
2. Wolf Delisting Status Update: **Mr. Kennedy** first introduced Mr. Ken Kesson who is currently acting field operations manager for the Eastern UP for the Wildlife Division. **Mr. Kesson** stated he is originally from downstate and has been a wildlife biologist for 11 years and looks forward to attending future Council meetings. **Mr. Kennedy** then provided an update on the wolf delisting activity that has occurred since the last EUPCAC meeting in December. He mentioned the January 4, 2021 delisting of gray wolves by the USF&WS, the January 14, 2021 filing of a lawsuit challenging the gray wolf delisting, the January 25, 2021 filing of another similar lawsuit, and the February 1, 2021

response by the USF&WS to the lawsuits indicating their “delisting determination used the best scientific and commercial data available.” He added the Biden administration, however, announced on inauguration day that the Department of Interior would reexamine the delisting of the gray wolf, as well as other decisions involving endangered species made by the Trump administration. He stated this is information he is passing along to keep the Council up to date. Next, he reviewed a snapshot of the requirements for a Wolf Management Advisory Council according to state (Michigan) statute. A press release was issued on January 27th soliciting applications to serve on the council. In addition to member representation requirements, the council will meet at least once a year in a public meeting format and shall submit to the NRC and the legislature a report that makes non-binding recommendations as to the proper management of wolves in the state of Michigan. The DNR Director has the ultimate decision to choose members of this council, which he will do in February. **Mr. Kennedy** noted there were 90-100 applications submitted by the deadline. He opened the floor for questions.

- Mr. Cords from the audience asked if a member will be chosen who is not part of an organization and is a hunter and a general member of the public. **Mr. Kennedy** stated it will be the Director’s discretion and there was a category to apply as an independent. Mr. Cords added that he did apply and feels he would be a fair and impartial person in the process and would like to ensure the everyday person is included. He spoke about Mr. Rickley of St. Ignace who attended the December meeting and offered a ride-along to see wolves on the landscape. He did do this and found it extremely educational and beneficial and encouraged others to do the same.
- **Mr. Wright** asked what is meant by a [member who represents] an organization that promotes conservation. **Mr. Kennedy** stated it is a good question; however, it is worded exactly the same in state statute and will be up to the interpretation of the Director. He added there are several conservation partners across the state as the DNR cannot do their work without them.
- **Ms. Haughey** reminded the group that former EUPCAC Chair Dick Pershinske was very active in the development of the first two management plans as a representative of the Michigan Farm Bureau. She emphasized that no matter who is selected to serve, neither the Council nor the public, who all have been very active in providing input and comments that the DNR is listening to, should feel eliminated from the process. **Mr. Kennedy** added there will be a separate engagement process on the management plan that will be brought to the Councils and the public at some point to provide input and feedback.
- **Mr. Cox** asked if the lawsuits that were filed were fast-track type lawsuits that move through the system quickly. **Mr. Kennedy** stated he believes last time it took 18-24 months before the federal court judge decided to put wolves back on the endangered species list. **Mr. Cox** asked if the same type of decision is made and it is before the Wolf Management Advisory Council meets or finishes their duties, will the DNR still move forward with an updated management plan. **Mr. Kennedy** stated the guidance is to keep the Council together for at least this calendar year.
- **Vice Chair Gorniak** asked why one of the lawsuits was filed in California. **Mr. Kennedy** stated he cannot speak for those that filed the lawsuits, citing legal strategies play a part in their decisions.

New Business

1. **State Forest Management Plan:** **Mr. Dan Heckman** thanked the Council for letting him speak and introduced himself as a forest planning and modeling specialist with the Forest Resources Division out of Gaylord. He provided a review of his background which included a degree from MTU and working in the UP early in his career. He presented the following slides regarding the revision of the state’s forest management plan:

- *Goal:* Create a new State Forest Management Plan that will ensure Michigan's residents, stakeholders, partners, and industries trust and are confident that the Michigan DNR will sustainably and responsibly manage state forest land on their behalf. This includes three major parts: revise the regional state forest management plans created in 2013, incorporate the state forest management plan of 2008, and use a more sophisticated model incorporating multiple values utilizing new software that will use a more scientific approach with less assumptions. The goal is to combine the two plans into one concise planning document that is less redundant and easier to understand.
- *Three Levels of Planning/Modeling:* 1) Strategic/long-term planning (150-200 years – sustainability, cover-types/age classes/harvest levels per decade); 2) Strategic/mid-term planning (10-year plan – SFMP, guides annual harvest prescriptions per MA/FMU); 3) Operational/short-term planning (1 year at a time implementation tool, focuses on a compartment/YOE scale).
- *Strategic Plan for Regional State Forest Management Plan Revision:* A one-page strategic working document was shown indicating all the moving parts to the process. The goal, current conditions, lines of effort, strategies for each effort and desired end state were described in detail. The management plan needs to be updated to address some of the current challenges such as forest health concerns (spruce budworm, beech bark disease, emerald ash borer). One of the lines of effort includes engaging with staff, public, and stakeholders throughout the planning process, which is why this topic is on the Council agenda. Staff took a hard look backwards to see what has and hasn't worked to set a more meaningful direction forward.
- *Team:* Three teams of staff have been assembled for this project: the modeling team, the writing team, and the engagement team with 6-8 staff members and all divisions represented on each. An explanation of each team and their responsibilities was provided.
- *Timeline:* The project began in September 2019 and work has been slowly progressing since then with quarterly tasks, reporting and evaluation. Implementation and monitoring is slated to begin May 2022.
- *Consolidation of Management Areas:* Previous management units were small, very complex and required a sizable amount of analysis and harvest targets were difficult. As a result, management areas were increased to allow for realistic goals and a meaningful impact on the landscape. For the eastern UP, 33 management areas were consolidated into 6 and based on ecological subsections. For the western UP, 33 management areas were consolidated into 11. A map was shown of each.
- *New Cover-Type Classification:* Another objective was to be more specific with the forest cover-type classification. A chart showing 25 forested cover-types (expanded to include planted cover-types and oak differentiation) and 11 non-forested cover-types (expanded for wildlife habitat classification and afforestation opportunities) was shown and explained.
- *Developed Growth & Yield Data:* Data was assembled to provide yield information. When a harvest is projected, an analysis can be conducted to stratify the landscape into specific cover-types and then further stratify the cover-types in density classes, etc. producing yield tables. Examples were explained and shown. Factors that describe the future condition of the forest can be reviewed. This data will help staff make better decisions and conduct better planning.
- *Standing Inventory & Harvest Volumes:* Additional information that has been gathered will allow for modeling and prediction of forest products that are sold. For example, a metric of diversity within the stands can help predict activity over time and can show what happens in the forest based on different scenarios.
- *Recently Incorporated Carbon & Canopy Information:* Carbon and canopy data for use as a potential future revenue factor was recently incorporated.

- *Developing Pilot Model for Pigeon River Country:* This pilot, which encompasses about 400,000 acres (10% of the state forest), will help test the concepts and theories being developed. There is an elk herd within this region requiring special goals to maintain a certain level of habitat along with a GEMs (grouse enhancement management site). This pilot will also help with determining needs for deer wintering complexes in the UP as well as grouse habitat management.
- *Stratum Level Strategic Model:* A flowchart was shown with information that has always been collected, produced, and reported which can be fed into this model to help better predict what to do in the future with regards to habitat and forest management.
- *Stand Level Implementation Model:* This model would influence and guide what should be cut each year to meet high level objectives and targets, which would go through the normal open house and compartment review process before treatments are approved.
- *Developed a Pilot Model:* This model is almost finished and will be ready to roll-out statewide. It involves a plan to grow a little bit bigger and older trees but still do harvesting. This model would be good for Kirtland warbler management, deer wintering complexes, or GEMs areas.
- *Engagement Team:* The engagement team has been busy creating stakeholder lists, categorizing them into groups, identifying level of engagement for each group, and identifying key points and methods of engagement. They also drafted a tribal contact letter, created website content, conducted public and stakeholder surveys and notifications, and created a glossy one-page flyer to inform legislators on the process. Survey results, when ready, will be posted on the website for everyone to review.
- *Engagement Plan:* A chart was shown indicating the primary methods of engagement at engagement points.
- *Writing Team:* The writing team assessed the 2008 state forest management plan and the 2013 regional plans, created a consolidated outline, and began work on the introduction (legal and policy framework, special resource direction, mission, vision and strategic goals), Michigan's forest history, current conditions and trends, and desired future condition. They will also integrate feature species management and climate change adaptation.
- *What's Next?* The next steps include finishing the pilot implementation model, expanding the pilot strategic model to entire state (gather input on management direction from managers and staff, conduct scenario modeling, and incorporate goals), releasing the first draft this summer, and engage, revise, approve and release. Once the first draft is released this summer, there will be opportunities for comment with specific targeted engagement with groups like the UPCACs, and feedback will be incorporated into a second draft before seeking approval. **Mr. Heckman** opened the floor for questions.
 - Mr. Cords from the public asked if the new software will give an indication as forest lands are cut, what type of repopulation would be needed. **Mr. Heckman** stated the software does not do this, rather it will be up to staff to re-evaluate what is needed to support different habitats for different species and the software can help figure out how to get there.
 - **Mr. Wright** stated he recently attended a convention for conservation districts and a presentation from MTU included the creation of a climate change tree atlas, which models various climate change scenarios and the effect on growth and distribution of tree species. He asked if there are plans to review it. **Mr. Heckman** stated they have been working very closely with the presenter Mr. Stephen Handler who has been giving them guidance on how to address climate change within the state forest management plan.

Chair Buckingham thanked Mr. Heckman for his informative presentation.

2. CAC Membership Update: **Ms. Haughey** stated every two years, half of the Council members' term limits expire and are up for renewal. Those up for renewal include Mr. Allan Augustyn, Ms. Kristy Beyer, Mr. AJ Downey, Mr. Kevin Erickson, Mr. Tim Hass, Mr. Bernie Hubbard, Mr. Tom Paquin and Mr. Tony Wright. All have expressed an interest to renew except for Mr. Augustyn. This creates a total of 4 vacancies left by Mr. Jim Duke, Mr. Glenn Moll, Ms. Angle Abbs Portice, and Mr. Augustyn. The CAC Selection Committee, which is a mix of staff and outside stakeholders, will meet to review all applications received and choose new members based on a variety of demographics (interest, experience, county, etc.). She encouraged anyone interested in the Eastern UPCAC to fill out an application this week; applications are available on the webpage (www.michigan.gov/upcac). She stated she appreciates those Council members interested in renewing.
3. Additional Agenda Items Added by Council: **Chair Buckingham** stated no additional items were added.

Subcommittee Reports

1. Fisheries Subcommittee Report: **Vice Chair Gorniak** noted there is optimism that cormorant control will be available again this year. **Mr. Kovacs** added that staff are reviewing sites, seeking input, and working with the USDA and USF&WS as they have in the past.
2. Policy Impact Subcommittee Report: **Mr. Hass** stated nothing has been submitted for review.

Next Meeting

1. Next EUPCAC Meeting: **Chair Buckingham** indicated the next meeting of the EUPCAC will be on **Thursday, April 22, 2021** at 6:00pm virtually via Zoom as state employees are still required to work remotely.
2. Items for Next Meeting Agenda: **Chair Buckingham** opened the floor for suggestions on agenda topics for the next meeting; none were immediately brought forth. He stated if there are any items of interest for the next agenda, please email them to him, Ms. Haughey or Ms. Dahlstrom.

Public Comments

Chair Buckingham opened the floor for additional public comments.

1. Mr. David Cords, Paradise: Mr. Cords stated he would like to apply for the Eastern UP CAC; however, his permanent residence is in the lower peninsula even though he has property in the Eastern UP. If he can apply, he will as he feels he has something relevant to contribute. He stated again that he applied for the Wolf Advisory Council as well. He noted his time spent with Mr. Rickley on a ride-along was very important to him and he learned a great deal. He strongly encouraged others to do the same. He has been an unsuccessful deer hunter for three years now and the deer situation in the eastern UP is not good. **Chair Buckingham** acknowledged his comments, indicating he appreciates Mr. Cords for attending and bringing his comments forward.

Closing Comments from the Council

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

1. **Vice Chair Gorniak** noted the recent press release regarding the deer habitat grants and asked if the amount available should be doubled (\$100,000 to \$200,000) since it was cancelled last year due to the pandemic. **Ms. Haughey** stated she will ask Mr. Bill Scullon, who is the grant administrator, and respond back. She noted it is important to know that these types of grants are available should anyone be interested in them.

- *Response from Mr. Scullon after the meeting on 2/11/21: Last year's DRIP funds were rolled back into the funding source and they were reauthorized again this fiscal year as another DRIP grant appropriation. It was not lost. Public Act 106 of 1971 created the DRIP fund, whereby \$1.50 from every deer hunting license sold statewide goes into a fund to be exclusively used for the improvement and maintenance of habitat for deer, acquisition of land for deer management, and the payment in lieu of taxes on purchased lands.*
2. **Mr. Thomas** asked Mr. Cords what county he resides in and where his property is located. Mr. Cords stated he lives in Wayne County and has property north of Paradise, MI.

Adjourn

There being no further business, **Chair Buckingham** thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the meeting at 7:24pm Eastern.

Approved 4/22/21