

Eastern Upper Peninsula Citizen Advisory Council (EUPCAC)
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, June 17, 2021
6:00-8:30pm Eastern
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

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

Council Members Present

Tom Buckingham	Kevin Erickson	Tom Paquin
Olivia Castles	Al Garavaglia	Mark Spencer
Ken Collier	Gary Gorniak	Jack Thomas
Jeff Cox	Bernie Hubbard	Julie Timmer
Grant Dewitt	Robert Liebermann	Tony Wright

Council Members Excused/Absent

Jarrold Biebel	Kyle Edwards	Travis Kangas
AJ Downey	Tim Hass	

Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Staff Liaisons & Guests

Bob Burnham, Forest Resources Division, Marquette
Kevin Dennis, Parks & Recreation Division, Newberry
Kristi Dahlstrom, Executive Division, Marquette
Paul Gaberdiel, Eastern UP Trails/PRD, Newberry
Sgt. Calvin Smith, Law Enforcement Division, Newberry
Stacy Haughey, UP Field Deputy, Executive Division, Marquette
Kristie Sitar, Wildlife Division, Newberry
Dan Kennedy, Wildlife Division, Lansing
Mike Parker, Wildlife Division, Lansing
Cory Kovacs, Fisheries Division, Newberry

Call to Order/Roll Call

The Eastern UP Citizens' Advisory Council meeting on June 17, 2021, was called to order by Chair Buckingham at 6:00pm. He welcomed everyone in attendance (approximately 36 total). **Ms. Haughey**, DNR UP Field Deputy, indicated the meeting will be guided with a powerpoint presentation and reviewed a slide with virtual meeting tips. She provided an overview of the Upper Peninsula Citizens' Advisory Councils (East and West), which are advisory groups to the DNR designed to help identify how the DNR can be more effective and responsive. She indicated the DNR is very appreciative of the relationship with Council members. The Council's website at www.michigan.gov/upcac is available for more information. She displayed a listing of guests who registered to attend the meeting and welcomed them, including Natural Resources Commissioner (NRC) Tom Baird, DNR staff and members of the media.

Chair Buckingham asked Ms. Dahlstrom to read off the names of all those attending virtually and by phone. A listing of current Council members was displayed on screen. **Chair Buckingham** stated he appreciates everyone's service and time given to the Council.

Adoption of Agenda

Chair Buckingham asked the Council if there were any further corrections or additions to the agenda; none were brought forth. **Vice Chair Gorniak 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 April 22, 2021, EUPCAC meeting minutes, which were emailed to the Council previously; none were brought forth. **Mr. Spencer motioned to approve the minutes as submitted; Mr. Erickson supported the motion. Ayes: All. Nays: None. Absent: See listing on page 1. Motion carried.**

Chair Comments

Chair Buckingham indicated a statement by Council member Mr. Paquin at the last meeting resonated with him and he wanted to take this time to remind everyone to maintain a respectful dialogue during statements and opinions offered by those in attendance, especially to staff present as they are the folks on the ground, and the Council is fortunate to have them present to provide their view of the issues discussed.

Public Comments on Agenda Items

Chair Buckingham opened the floor for public comment for those that pre-registered:

1. *Mr. Eric Wallis of Rudyard (3 min):* Mr. Wallis spoke about this sheep herd and the loss of lambs over several years, including about 50 last year and 92 lambs in one year 10 years ago, which is a large financial loss for him. He submitted a letter to Vice Chair Gorniak about it, which has been circulated. He stated he doesn't have time to do a daily count of his sheep but keeps records of when they are born and of the losses. He is familiar with coyote kills and because of the nature of lamb disappearance, he feels the lambs are disappearing because of wolves. **Ms. Haughey** asked him if he has reported the missing lamb to the DNR. Mr. Wallis stated he has in the past but has not recently because he has no physical proof. He stated he has an electrical fence, and something is taking the lambs and jumping the fence. **Ms. Haughey** indicated there is funding through the federal government for reported losses, but there have not been any claims from him since 2015. She indicated she has mentioned previously how important it is to receive reports of interactions. Only 6 verified incidents have been reported in the last three years. She encouraged Mr. Wallis to contact the DNR as soon as he is aware of a missing lamb. **Ms. Sitar** stated there are records of payments for Mr. Wallis' sheep losses for 5 in 2012 and 1 in 2015. She stated no matter what the loss is from (coyote, etc.), if the loss is reported and verified, payment is still available. Mr. Wallis indicated from his previous experience in reporting a loss, if there is no carcass, then there is no proof and many times, there is no carcass. **Ms. Sitar** encouraged him to report any future loss so a determination can be made. Mr. Wallis indicated he understands the reporting system and wanted to make it known that wolves are very active in his area. **Vice Chair Gorniak** asked if losses were reported, would the DNR try to remove the wolves. **Ms. Sitar** stated if it were a verified wolf depredation, then a variety of non-lethal and lethal options would be discussed. Mr. Wallis spoke of working with Central Michigan University on a study and non-lethal options are extremely short-lived. He stated the bottom line is legislation is needed to allow farmers a legal option to take care of their issues with wolves. **Ms. Sitar** reviewed the current language regarding the act of pursuing livestock. Discussion ensued.

2. *Mr. Steven Dey of Moran (3 min):* Mr. Moran noted he looks forward to the day the Council can meet in person. He stated he spoke at the recent NRC meeting and learned the Wolf Management Advisory Council will be meeting the first week in August tentatively in mid-Lansing. He was disappointed to learn this, especially since there is only one UP person on the Council and the issues with wolves are all in the UP, although the DNR hasn't acknowledge there being any issues with wolves. He stated everyone in the UP is upset about the meeting location and it should be relayed to the Director. His second comment was a suggestion to improve communications with people out in the field. There are great publications in Michigan, local newspapers, local television stations and shows, such as Michigan Out of Doors, 906 Outdoor, etc. He stated some people today rely on information coming from emails, text messages and computers, however, that type of messaging doesn't always reach everyone in the UP. He believes getting information into the printed media would really help to the get message about what is going on with the wolf problem and to communicate the need for depredation reporting.
3. *Mr. Bob Warner of the Eastern UP (3 min):* Mr. Warner read a letter that he will be sending to the DNR. He spoke about his extensive hunting career over the last 50 years, cataloging 170 days a year in the woods, and the increased sightings of several wolves each time, which has reduced the number of deer to never-before-seen levels. He believes there are at least 30 wolves in Raber and DeTour Townships.

Chair Buckingham thanked all three for their comments. **Ms. Haughey** stated the comments received today echoed some of those made at the NRC meeting on June 10th. She indicated she also attended the NRC meeting and Director Eichinger very concisely responded to those issues. To provide this same information to the Council, she thought it best to replay an audio clip from the NRC meeting of the Director's response. The audio clip was played for attendees, in which the Director responded to the comments made by Mr. Stephen Dey. **Chair Buckingham** stated there is depredation of commercial livestock and there is depredation of a state resource, the whitetail deer, which is causing so much dismay from the hunting public. He said perhaps its wolves, maybe not, or perhaps it's the lack of unlimited baiting from previous times which is now regulated. He stated something is taking the whitetail deer off the landscape and without the ability to report deer depredation similar to livestock depredation, there doesn't seem to be a way to make a case either way other than through verbal reports. He noted he feels the division between the hunting public and the DNR is growing on this issue.

Old Business

1. *Acknowledge of DNR Response to April Resolutions re: Comments to Inland Walleye Management Plan & Underwater Spearfishing:* **Chair Buckingham** acknowledged receipt of the DNR's response to the Council's May resolution regarding comments to the draft inland walleye management plan and underwater spearfishing, which was emailed to Council members when it was received. It is the same response sent to the WUPCAC for the same resolution. He stated the response indicates the comments were appreciated and are under review. **Ms. Haughey** displayed a copy of the response onscreen. **Chair Buckingham** asked if the Council had any questions or comments; none were brought forth.
2. *Update on Wolf Management Plan:* **Mr. Haughey** displayed on-screen the current status of the wolf management plan which included the following:

- The new public attitude survey is currently being conducted with researchers at MSU (65,000 surveys distributed so far).
- The wolf white paper that informs and accompanies the plan is being update. It is a review of biological and social science relevant to wolf management in Michigan.
- There will be an opportunity for the public to provide input on the current plan this fall.
- The expected completion date for the entire plan remains the end of June 2022.

She reiterated this is information that has been provided previously and were the conditions Director Eichinger spoke about and referenced in the audio clip played earlier. He also mentioned them at the last UPSA meeting. She added there have been several conversations regarding the results of predation and how it relates to the deer heard in the UP. She referenced the predatory prey study and its website at www.campfirewildlife.com which has also been presented previously to the Council. This UP study has been ongoing for several years and it is very helpful information in understanding predation on deer in the UP. She suggested an updated presentation at a future meeting. She added, as the Director referenced in the audio clip, the Eastern and Western UPCACs continue to play a role in providing input, and she hopes the public will continue to be active in the process as well.

3. *Chronic Wasting Disease Update:* **Ms. Haughey** displayed on-screen an update by Mr. Chad Stewart about a field-based CWD test that has been in circulation in various media sources. He indicated that although the field test shows promise, it is not anywhere near ready for use in the field. The test itself needs to be validated, which takes time, and folks should not expect to see these kits in use or available in stores this fall. He also indicated the DNR is still focused on collecting samples from the UP CWD core area and hunters' assistance is needed to help meet the testing goals.

Ms. Haughey introduced Dr. Russ Mason, former Wildlife Division Chief and now DNR Executive in Residence and Professor for the DNR and MSU College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, who provided his latest findings on CWD research. **Dr. Mason** stated CWD is a problem not only in Michigan, but has been across the Midwest and across North America for some time, and progress is beginning to be made both in terms of surveillance and diagnostics. He stated in 2017, the legislature provided the DNR funding to conduct practical research that would be a benefit to managers. He provided an overview of the work researchers have been doing and what they expect the practical implications to be.

- Four segments of projects were funded initially to look at animal-side testing, ways to decontaminate equipment in the environment, education, and interjurisdiction of cooperation.
- Projects in the first round of funding were explained: Inactivation of CWD prions by peroxymonosulfate (oxone) and hypochlorous acid; Composting deactivation of CWD prions; Field animal-side testing and improving laboratory diagnostic sensitivity; Optimizing CWD surveillance (forecasting models); Agent-based surveillance and management modeling; High through-put genetic resource for deer disease and population management; Environmental behavior, bioavailability and persistence of CWD prions; Impacts of harvest regulations on demographics of harvest; Multistate CWD strategic planning initiative; Collaborative development of CWD education and outreach; CWD extension educator.
- Projects in the second round of funding were reviewed: Immobilization of CWD prions by activated charcoals; Importance of group size, bioaccumulation and baiting to CWD persistence and spread; Development of a regional CWD adaptive management framework; Evaluation of hunters' willingness to help manage CWD; Web applications for disease visualization and decision-making.

- A third round of “plus up” funding projects included: Reconvene multistate strategic planning initiative (report available if interested); Additional funding to support application and warehousing of surveillance tools; Additional resources to apply genomic tools to high priority management questions.
- The final group are high dollar projects that are pending: Additional funding to expand and enhance composting strategies to deactivate CWD prions; Additional funding to test whether UV light enhances oxidative inactivation of CWD; Additional funding to evaluate whether pyrolysis in simulated wildfire and incinerator combustion inactivates prions and also whether biochar binds, contains, and reduces infectivity of prions.
- Highlights of upcoming developments include:
 - Wildlife Management Institute “In the Works: Recent and Ongoing CWD Research and Management Projects”: A webpage that lists every CWD educational research project in North America with a statement of intent, list of investigators and their location. It’s primarily a tool to encourage researchers to talk to one another. It is constantly updated and available.
 - Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Special Session of CWD surveillance and modeling tools: The purpose is to begin building a comprehensive and unified surveillance and management network for CWD.
 - National Wildlife Disease Surveillance Network: Agricultural animal disease labs across the county have formed this surveillance network to be better informed of active and emerging wildlife diseases and take advantage of possible funding opportunities.
 - YouTube.com video clips highlighting funded research expected the beginning of August: This will be helpful for those who would rather watch than read about what projects their tax dollars (through a legislative act) are funding.

Chair Buckingham thanked Dr. Mason for the outstanding presentation and information on CWD research.

New Business

1. **Fire Danger 101**: **Mr. Burnham** provided a brief overview of the DNR’s burning permit system and fire danger in general. He stated it has been abnormally dry so far and there is a great potential for a high fire season this year.
 - ***Burn Permits***: A burn permit is permission to burn. It’s not a tangible printed permit, rather it’s a “permission” to burn. If there is no snow on the ground, then a permit is needed.
 - ***What can be burned?*** Raw materials such as tree limbs, brush, leaves, grass. No tires.
 - ***Why do you need a permit?*** Given the fire danger this year, if there is no burn permit issued for the day due to conditions, and it is either witnessed or reported that you are burning, a visit by an officer could occur. By law, “a person in violation of causing a fire is liable for all damages resulting from that fire including the cost of any governmental unit fighting the fire.” Fire prevention is the reason for the system.
 - ***How to obtain a permit***: Access the interactive website (www.michigan.gov/dnr/burnpermit). Every morning by 10am, the site is updated with current conditions and locations where permits are allowed. Burn permits are only good for one day. People burning are responsible to keep their burn in check and not let it get out of control. An example of what a current day looks like for permits was shown on the interactive site. Local restrictions must also be considered, and the website will indicate to check them if needed.
 - ***How burning conditions are determined***: Conditions are based on temperature, winds, and relative humidity. Staff work closely with the National Weather System and utilize a field modeling program that takes weather collected from weather stations and helps inform daily

predictions so that notice of whether burn permits will be needed each day can be posted by 10am EDT. In the UP, there is a rotating duty officer that works out of the Marquette Incident Command Center who prepares a daily fire briefing based on the daily predictions to help determine how fire personnel is staffed. There are different rating and restriction criteria for spring and summer. Fire management units in the UP were reviewed.

- **Equipment:** Pictures of different types of aircraft that skims water were shown and their use explained. Aircraft use is a partnership with the Forest Service.
- **Firewise Community:** This is a website (www.firewise.org) that provides helpful tips on how to keep your structures safe from fire as well as a host of other helpful information.

Chair Buckingham thanked Mr. Burnham for the presentation.

2. **Review of Potential Revisions to EUPCAC Bylaws:** **Ms. Haughey** stated in response to virtual meetings and executive orders related to them over the past year, several of the DNR's advisory councils, which were not established by statute, have refreshed their bylaws to reflect some of the changes regarding references to the Open Meetings Act. She noted she and Ms. Dahlstrom reviewed the EUPCAC's bylaws, which have not been revised since 2009, and discovered a few minor procedural items, title changes, format, etc. that could also be updated. She reviewed the UPCAC's primary role, the Charter of the UPCACs and touched on how and why the UPCACs were created. A screen noting the minor changes by section was shown. Language regarding meeting in a virtual platform, especially during winter conditions, is still pending. She stated two copies of the bylaws, one with revisions shown and one with revisions incorporated will be sent to Council members, and she encouraged a thorough review of them and to submit comments. A timeline was shown with the option to accept changes at the next meeting in August.
3. **Additional Agenda Items Added by Council:** **Chair Buckingham** stated no additional items were added.

Subcommittee Reports

1. **Fisheries Subcommittee Report:** **Vice Chair Gorniak** stated the committee did not have any activity to report. He noted the fishing has been very productive in the Eastern UP the last couple of weeks.
2. **Policy Impact Subcommittee Report:** The committee did not have any activity to report.

DNR Reports from Division Staff (Reported after Subcommittee Reports on agenda to allow for speaker presentations)

Written staff reports were provided via email to Council members on June 10, 2021. The following were verbal additions to those reports:

1. **Stacy Haughey, UP Field Deputy:** **Ms. Haughey** stated she did not have anything additional to report. **Mr. Wright** stated he has seen a significant decrease in the number of printed guidebooks available. He stated not everyone, particularly older people, have smartphones, a phone signal, or a computer. He has heard a number of complaints both from vendors and the public and he wanted to pass it along. **Ms. Haughey** stated she agrees 100% and likes to carry a guidebook with her in remote areas. She stated she has passed this same information along to the appropriate DNR staff and noted they are needed with the increase in new customers and making sure these resources are available. **Mr. Wright** stated one vendor indicated they only received 300 fishing guidebooks this year compared to 3,000 previously and have run out already. **Ms. Haughey** stated she will look into the matter right away. She also noted that many staff are now back in the field doing their normal work, and that staff

will be transitioning to offices between July 12 and September 7. There may be times between these dates that offices will be open to the public, but it has not yet been announced.

2. Cory Kovacs, Fisheries Division: **Mr. Kovacs** concurred with Vice Chair Gorniak that fishing in the eastern UP has been going well. Bluegill fishing was especially good during Free Fishing Weekend in June. In relation to the inland walleye management plan, he stated fisheries staff are actively harvesting the rearing ponds now and the described the efforts to date. **Vice Chair Gorniak** asked about stocking prescriptions from 2020. **Mr. Kovacs** indicated they became priorities for 2021 instead. Discussion on rearing ponds ensued.
3. Bob Burnham, Forest Resources Division: **Mr. Burnham** stated he did not have anything to add to his written report.
4. Sgt. Calvin Smith, Law Enforcement Division: **Sgt. Smith** stated officers have been busy with summer marine activities in full force. Officers were called to assist a search and rescue in Luce County for a missing fisherman who was found the next day with help from Michigan State Police and their helicopter. He also mentioned two new recruits are coming to the Eastern UP from the last academy. **Vice Chair Gorniak** stated he was contacted by Mr. Stephen King of Newberry to ask if it was routine to search property without a warrant as an Engadine resident he knows had his equipment and fish confiscated but was not arrested. **Sgt. Smith** stated without knowing the full details of the incident, he cannot comment on it. However, typically officers do not search anything without a search warrant. He stated there may be exceptions, but they are limited and may not apply in this instance. Arrests are sometimes not made until the case makes it way through the court system.
5. Kevin Dennis, Parks & Recreation Division: **Mr. Dennis** stated he is the park manager at Tahquamenon Falls State Park and is filling in for Mr. Cowing. He provided a recap of state park activity in the Eastern UP since Memorial Day and it appears to be another blockbuster tourism year in state parks. Hiring of enough summer staff has proven difficult as every park seems to be a few staff short. He noted several construction projects throughout Tahquamenon Falls State Park, Indian Lake State Park and Straights State Park that are occurring this summer as well. He indicated the Governor's recent announcement of a potential million-dollar boost to the state park infrastructure is welcome news. Mr. Warner from the public asked if the heavily damaged docks on Lyme Island will be repaired. **Mr. Dennis** stated he is not aware of the activity on Lyme Island and can get an update for the next meeting. **Ms. Haughey** noted the website indicated a cleanup project slated for Lyme Island in September.
6. Paul Gaberdiel, Eastern UP Trails-Parks & Recreation Division: **Mr. Gaberdiel** stated he did not have anything to add to his written report. **Chair Buckingham** asked if there has been an increase in ATV use in the last few weeks. **Mr. Gaberdiel** stated usage has risen dramatically since the snow melted. **Vice Chair Gorniak** asked about increasing the grooming on certain trails. **Mr. Gaberdiel** stated they are working with grant sponsors that have the capability. There has been increase in revenues with the increase in permits, but usage has gone up faster than they can keep up with. **Mr. Garavaglia** thanked Mr. Gaberdiel and Ms. Karen Rodock, forester from the Sault Ste. Marie office, for their work on the trail by Garnet Lake Park that was in bad need of repair to prevent future accidents/injuries. **Mr. Liebermann** spoke about a trail that needs a lot of attention due to big holes filled with water causing people to go off trail and doing quite a bit of off-trail damage. There has also been a lot of

garbage left on that route. **Mr. Gaberdiel** thanked him for reporting it as he wasn't aware; he will work with the grant sponsor to get repair work going.

7. *Kristie Sitar, Wildlife Division*: **Ms. Sitar** noted deer harvest data should be out in the month of July for those interested. **Vice Chair Gorniak** asked if wolves are currently being collared in the eastern UP. **Ms. Sitar** stated the trapping period is almost over, and they don't collar every animal they see. **Mr. Garavaglia** asked who he would contact if he has another deer depredation on this property. **Ms. Sitar** stated he can contact her for private land issues.

Next Meeting

1. *Next EUPCAC Meeting*: **Chair Buckingham** indicated the next meeting of the EUPCAC will be on **Tuesday, August 10, 2021**, at 6:00pm. A decision on location or holding the meeting virtual will be made at a later time.
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 (Any Topic)

Chair Buckingham opened the floor for additional public comments.

1. *Mr. Terry Schaedig, Pickford*: Mr. Schaedig did not attend after registering.

Closing Comments from the Council

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

- **Mr. Cox** asked, in reference to the update on the wolf management plan earlier on the agenda, about the public survey and how the 65,000 surveys were distributed and also where the mailing list came from, whether it was random or solicited from groups. **Ms. Haughey** stated that Mr. Dan Kennedy could answer the questions best but had to leave the meeting. She will have Mr. Kennedy respond back to him.
- **Mr. Erickson** mentioned a Senate bill that was introduced by Senator McBroom regarding the Wolf Management Advisory Council requiring the council to be reappointed with Upper Peninsula residents.
- **Vice Chair Gorniak** asked why the wolf management plan won't be updated until June 2022. Ms. Haughey stated she will have Mr. Kennedy respond back.
- **NRC Commissioner Baird** thanked the Council for allowing him to attend the meeting. He stated it was very interesting and is super impressed with the organizational skills of UP sportsperson and conservationists. It is nice to see this group in action and he looks forward to meeting the Council in person soon. **Chair Buckingham** and **Ms. Haughey** thanked him for attending.
- **Mr. Liebermann** asked when the meetings go back to in person if there will be an option to attend virtual at the same time. **Ms. Haughey** stated she and Ms. Dahlstrom will be investigating options to see if it will be feasible to do both at the same time with consideration of quality internet connections at meeting locations and the ability to conduct the virtual platform with limited staff and equipment. She stated it may be advantageous to conduct a virtual meeting in lieu of an in-person meeting during extreme winter conditions. **Chair Buckingham** agreed that it may be an option to look into.

Adjourn

There being no further business, **Chair Buckingham** thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the meeting at 8:22pm Eastern.

Approved 8/10/2021