

Eastern Upper Peninsula Citizen Advisory Council (EUPCAC)
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, October 19, 2021
6:00-8:30pm Eastern
LMAS District Health Department, Newberry

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

Council Members Present

Jarrold Biebel	Kevin Erickson	Robert Liebermann
Tom Buckingham	Al Garavaglia	Tom Paquin
Ken Collier	Gary Gorniak	Jack Thomas
Jeff Cox	Tim Hass	Julie Weist
Kyle Edwards	Bernie Hubbard	Tony Wright

Council Members Excused/Absent

Grant Dewitt	Travis Kangas
AJ Downey	Mark Spencer

Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Staff Liaisons & Guests

Eric Cowing, Parks & Recreation Division, Newberry
Kristi Dahlstrom, Executive Division, Marquette
Lt. Skip Hagy, Law Enforcement Division, Newberry
Stacy Haughey, UP Field Deputy, Executive Division, Marquette
Cory Kovacs, Fisheries Division, Newberry
Kristen Matson, Forest Resources Division, Newberry
Brian Roell, Wildlife Division, Marquette
David Jentoft, Wildlife Division, Sault Ste. Marie
Tom Weston, Marketing & Outreach Division-Licensing, Lansing
Paul Gaberdiel, Parks & Recreation Division-Eastern UP Trails, Newberry

Call to Order/Introductions

The Eastern UP Citizens' Advisory Council meeting was called to order by **Chair Tom Buckingham** on October 19, 2021, at 6:00pm. He welcomed everyone in attendance, and noted several members and staff were attending either in-person or virtual through Zoom.

Ms. Haughey, DNR UP Field Deputy, provided 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 displayed a listing of guests who registered to attend the meeting and welcomed them. Introductions of all in attendance took place.

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 August 10, 2021, EUPCAC meeting minutes, which were emailed to the Council previously; none were brought forth. **Mr. Hass motioned to approve the minutes as submitted; Mr. Gorniak supported the motion. Ayes: All. Nays: None. Absent: See listing on page 1. Motion carried.**

Chair Comments

Chair Buckingham thanked everyone for attending the first in-person meeting since the pandemic began in early 2020. He stated he appreciated everyone's time and travel to attend.

Public Comments on Agenda Items

Chair Buckingham opened the floor for public comments on agenda items only; none were brought forth.

DNR Reports from Division Staff

Written staff reports were provided via email to Council members on October 12, 2021. The following were verbal additions to those reports:

1. Stacy Haughey, UP Field Deputy: **Ms. Haughey** stated Ms. Olivia Castles, EUPCAC Council member since April 2021, has transferred to an open position on the WUPCAC due to a residential move from Luce County to Marquette County. The UPCAC Selection Team was consulted and agreed with the decision. An alternate chosen during the early spring election (and who was chosen to fill any open positions during the following year) is being contacted to see if they are interested in filling the open slot.
2. Cory Kovacs, Fisheries Division: **Mr. Kovacs** noted the large number of fisheries orders that were acted upon at the recent NRC meeting and are listed in the NRC summary of the division reports.
3. Kristen Matson, Forest Resources Division: **Ms. Matson** did not have any additions to her report.
 - **Secretary Thomas** asked for feedback on the no bid sales in the lower peninsula and how staff kept up on preparing for sales during the pandemic. Ms. Matson further explained, noting staff worked individually and out of their vehicles.
 - **Mr. Garavaglia** asked about timber sales on Graymont land in Hudson and Hendricks Townships. **Ms. Matson** confirmed the DNR retained timber rights on that land and will manage timer sales to a certain extent.
4. Lt. Skip Hagy, Law Enforcement Division:
 - It has been a busy fall for officers.
 - A new officer in the Eastern UP will be at full duty before deer season.
 - Hunter safety classes and field days have been going very well. Lt. Hagy thanked the Hiawatha Sportsmen's Club and member Aaron Fulton who generously donated a .22 rifle which was won by an attending student, as well as the Chippewa County Shooting Association. The groups helped immensely with classes and offering prizes.
5. Jon Spieles, Marketing & Outreach Division: **Ms. Haughey** reported on behalf of Mr. Spieles stating the Michigan Wildlife Council will be meeting on October 22nd from 10:30am to 2:30pm at the LSSU Cisler Center in Sault Ste. Marie if anyone is interested in attending.

6. Eric Cowing, Parks & Recreation Division: **Mr. Cowing** added parks continue to be busy this fall with September having an increase of 36% over last year. Tahquamenon Falls State Park has been full the last few weekends.
 - **Mr. Biebel** asked for an update on Forest Lake in Alger County. **Mr. Cowing** stated the campground and boat launch belongs to the dam owner. **Mr. Kovacs** noted there has been a lot of discussion regarding this lake between the dam owner, Fisheries Division, and FERC to ensure the owner complies with restrictions under FERC, including flow rates and repairs.
7. Paul Gaberdiel, Parks & Recreation Division-Eastern UP Trails: **Mr. Gaberdiel** did not have anything to add to the report. Council members and staff congratulated him on his upcoming retirement. He stated he has 34 years of service and enjoyed working with the Council.
8. Dave Jentoft, Wildlife Division: **Mr. Jentoft** added bear season is winding down. Bear are still being registered and it is shaping up to be a decent season.

Old Business

1. Cormorant Control Update: **Mr. Kovacs** provided the following slide presentation which was given at the July NRC meeting by Mr. Randy Claramunt, DNR Lake Huron Basin Coordinator and lead on this topic. The presentation is available online at https://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/July_15_2021_Presentations_731155_7.pdf. Slide titles include: Timeline of Cormorant Management, Cormorant – Depredation Orders vs. Permits, Cormorant Abundance, New State Permit System, New State Permit System: Interior Region, Requirements of the New Permit System, Current Status of the DCCO-Fish Conflict in Michigan, Cormorant Management Techniques, Challenges to Implementing the New Permit System in Michigan, DCCO Control Take in 2021.
 - **Vice Chair Gorniak** stated he is disappointed only 2,000 birds were taken this year. With minimal control over the last 5 years, the population in the bays and inland lakes are in the thousands. The amount of money spent on fish stocking in these areas is being lost.
 - **Mr. Kovacs** stated Mr. Claramunt is working diligently to get more funding for control. It's been a challenging year working through the new permit system.
 - Problems with cormorants at the Thompson Fish Hatchery have been addressed by conservation officers. Shotgun shells were donated by a local muskey club.
 - **Mr. Wright** asked how lethal control carcasses are disposed of and if there are concerns of botulism. **Mr. Kovacs** stated carcasses are brought to landfills as a requirement of the permit and indicated testing and research is ongoing.
2. Category E Forest Road Funding (Dinky Line Road) (Ms. Matson & Mr. Gaberdiel):
 - **Mr. Garavaglia** noted funding hasn't increased since 1987; he is working with legislators to get an increase and clarification in the language on what funding can be used for.
 - **Mr. Gaberdiel** indicated since Dinky Line Road is a designated ORV route, he is working to obtain grading funding to help with potholes. **Mr. Garavaglia** stated he counted 61 potholes 10+ feet in diameter in a 4-mile stretch.
 - **Mr. Erickson** spoke about a road in which 52 landowners haven't been able to use in 18 months due to a logging job. **Mr. Gaberdiel** referred him to speak with Mr. Keith Magnusson from the DNR Newberry Office.

- **Ms. Matson** indicated capitol outlay projects are currently being prioritized for road work; the division is aware that several roads are in disrepair.

3. *Wolf Management Advisory Council (WMAC) Meeting Update (Ms. Haughey):*

- **Ms. Haughey** was not able to attend the meeting in Ironwood on October 11.
- Meetings have been recorded by MUCC and posted on their Facebook page.
- Upcoming meetings: November 5 in Gaylord and December 7 at Little Bear Arena in St. Ignace.
- For more information and public comment instructions: www.michigan.gov/wmac.

4. *Estimating the Abundance of Wolves in Michigan (Mr. Brian Roell, DNR Wildlife Biologist):*

- **Mr. Roell** provided a slide presentation to help explain what governs DNR staff and what parameters they have to work within. A similar presentation is available on the WMAC website (www.michigan.gov/wmac). The following is a summary of additional slides.
- Science Based Wildlife Management: The Michigan Wildlife Management Referendum (Proposal G) was approved by nearly 70% of voters in 1996. The amendment to PA 377 of 1996 requires that the Natural Resources Commission to the greatest extent practicable, use principles of sound scientific management in making decisions regarding the taking of game.
- The Role of Science in Wildlife Management: Example provided, if the DNR developed a wildlife management strategy and through rigorous testing, which was published in peer review journals, clearly showed if implemented it would cause a species to go extinct, should it be done? Answer is no.
- The Role of Science in Policy Development:
 - Science can provide useful information on consequences, science cannot prescribe outcomes or eliminate uncertainty, uncertainty may be of small and of little concern or large and pose considerable risk. The DNR's job is to provide the science.
 - Staff use science to predict an outcome. It does not indicate what choices to make, while acknowledging the uncertainty inherent in science. However, management decisions are rarely based on science alone. Decision-makers also must consider the values and priorities of citizens.
- The Scientific Method: A flow chart was shown to demonstrate the scientific method (observations, hypothesis, testing = conclusions or new hypothesis) versus a method commonly used by non-scientists (observations = draw conclusions).
- Additional slides: Back of the Envelope Calculations Based on Wolf Ecology, Occupied Range across the UP, Home Range vs. Territory, Wolf Territory Size, Occupied Wolf Range.
- Council/Public Questions:
 - **Mr. Gorniak** spoke about Wisconsin's occupancy model for wolves. He noted he feels wolves are taking advantage of deer yards and how alarming it is to see the decrease in the number of deer. **Mr. Roell** noted SUNY College is working on a model for all three states (WI, MI, MN) and indicated many factors affect deer, not just predators, adding winter severity is also one of many additional factors. He stated most people are using their observations (ie. seeing a decrease in deer) and determine it to be science without consideration of several other variables (winter severity, loss of habitat, all forms of predation, deer/fawn survival). Discussion ensued regarding observations resulting in conclusions verses actual science as well as issues with using sportsmen for survey efforts (biases/funding/time). **Mr. Roell** noted the next wolf survey will occur this upcoming winter in 2022.

- **Mr. Hoy & Mr. Bennett** from the audience stated their concerns with the number of deer that wolves eat a year and feels it's a problem in the eastern UP. **Mr. Roell** added there are a large number of articles on that topic with varied information and noted an in-depth presentation on how wolves affect deer abundance is available on the WMAC website (www.michigan.gov/wmac).
- **Chair Buckingham** noted this is an emotional issue for residents as deer matter to those who are hunters and those who have camps and purchased land in the UP. He cited other possible, alternative causes that may have contributed to the decrease in the deer herd (the end of unlimited baiting, an increase in the single buck tag, multiple tags offered for both gun and bow harvesting, special seasons, loss of habitat) and indicated he would be interested to see a timeline in relation these dates and how the deer numbers have been affected as a result. He added each year, the whitetail deer harvest has dropped according to the Mackinac Bridge survey numbers. **Mr. Roell** further discussed the factors that affect deer abundance and indicated wolves are just a small piece of the entire picture. He stated a difference in the number of tags could have an impact.
- **Mr. Wright** indicated he'd like to see the literature on the Great Lakes standard occupancy model from SUNY College previously mentioned. **Mr. Roell** indicated it is still in progress and will be published and shared.
- **Mr. Hoy** stated there were 143 wolf packs in the UP in 2020 and asked what the benefits are for having that many. **Mr. Roell** replied in general, wolves function as a large ecological benefit in keeping other wildlife in check.
- **Chair Buckingham** thanked Mr. Roell for providing the information and answering questions.

New Business

1. **Wildlife Division Updates (Mr. Jentoft):**

- Hunting Season Projections: Hunting season will be up slightly in comparison with last season. Last winter was mild and deer had favorable conditions. Observations are up based on anecdotal reports through phone conversations, etc. Buck observations will vary by area (southern and agricultural areas will likely see an increase and northern higher snowfall areas will see less). Due to the mild winter and early spring, deer should be in good condition and antler development should be above average.
- Regulations: Buck regulations will be the same as last season. Antlerless regulations in the UP have changed to a 3-tiered system: northern zone (no permits), mid-zone (1000 permits for each of two DMUs, one per hunter, all permits sold) and southern zone (open with universal antlerless license).
- Deer Check Stations: Limited check stations will be open in the UP November 15-18 from 8am to 4:30pm. Check online for an interactive map that lists dates, times, and addresses of all check stations. www.michigan.gov/deercheck
- Online Harvest Reporting: This voluntary harvest reporting system went live on October 1. It is voluntary this year and may become mandatory at a future time. All hunters are encouraged to report their harvest in this manner.

2. **Online Harvest Registration System Demonstration:** **Mr. Tom Weston**, DNR Licensing Systems, provided an online demonstration of the new harvest registration system.

- www.michigan.gov/dnrharvestreport
- System went live on October 1st and is voluntary this year.

- Fishermen utilize this same system for mandatory muskey reporting.
- It is recommended that all hunters report their harvest using this system.
- The elicense screen was shown and is where licenses can be purchased, points can be checked, and digests are available. This is where harvest registration can be accessed.
- Information to fill in was demonstrated. License number (printed on tags), name, address, date and location of harvest, antler points, etc.
- Only about 200 have reported a harvest so far as of October 19. Please spread the word.

3. UP Habitat Workgroup / Pilot & Research Handout (Ms. Haughey):

- UP Habitat Workgroup met on September 22, 2021 in Ishpeming.
- A pilot project has been initiated to create multi-year treatment plans for nine deer wintering complexes comprised of substantial state ownership. A handout explaining the project was included in the meeting packets.
- An external cedar regeneration research project is being conducted in conjunction with MTU.
- Due to time constraints, a more in-depth report will be deferred to the December meeting.

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

Subcommittee Reports

1. Fisheries Subcommittee Report: No activity to report.

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

- The subcommittee reviewed House Bills 5358, 5359 and 5360. A written summary was provided to Council members for review.
- HB 5358 & 5359 are to amend the existing laws with respect to guide services for hunting and fishing.
- HB 5360 recognizes and supports the public's right to hunt and fish but proposes that hunting and fishing determinations be pursuant to "sound scientific management" which is not defined.
- The subcommittee recommends to the Council that these bills should be opposed as they do not provide a readily discernable path for conservation or other law enforcement officers, thus leaving much interpretation for them and also for attorneys.
- After Council review and discussion, **Secretary Thomas motioned to approve the recommendation as a resolution; Mr. Paquin supported the motion. Ayes: 15. Nays: 2. Absent: See listing on page 1. Motion carried by majority.**

Next Meeting

1. Next EUPCAC Meeting: **Chair Buckingham** indicated the next meeting of the EUPCAC was scheduled to be held on Tuesday, December 14, 2021. However, the Wolf Management Advisory Council is scheduled to hold their meeting on December 7 in St. Ignace. To allow an opportunity for Council members to attend both meetings, he asked if the Council would agree to moving the next EUPCAC meeting to **Monday, December 6 in St. Ignace** at the same location. **Secretary Thomas motioned to change the December meeting date as indicated; Mr. Hass supported the motion. Ayes: All. Nays: None. Absent: See listing on page 1. Motion carried.**

2. Items for Next Meeting Agenda: **Chair Buckingham** asked for suggested topics for the next meeting be sent to him, Ms. Haughey or to Ms. Dahlstrom. One item, 2022 meeting dates, are expected to be presented for approval.

Public Comments (Any Topic)

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

1. Acknowledgement of Written Comment (Mr. Gary Heckman of Moran – Tree Stands/Ground Blinds on Public Land): A copy of the letter from Mr. Heckman was provided in the meeting packets for the Council to review. Mr. Heckman writes that he is opposed to wording in the hunting digest that indicates a name placed on a tree stand or ground blind on public land does not guarantee exclusive use. He feels if it is a requirement for Type 3 blinds to have a name, address and driver's license number permanently attached, then it should be considered personal property. **Chair Buckingham** asked for a comment from Lt. Hagy. **Lt. Hagy** stated depending on the type of blind that is being referenced, it could result in a violation; however, there are several variables to be considered.

Closing Comments from the Council

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

1. **Secretary Thomas** asked for a copy of the document that Mr. Roell referenced during his presentation. **Ms. Haughey** indicated she will email a link for WMAC website where the document is located: www.michigan.gov/wmac.
2. **Mr. Garavaglia** introduced Mr. John Kostiuk, the new Hudson Township supervisor. He also noted in reference to Category E funding, Hudson Township is comprised of 84% state land and is the second lowest taxable value township in Mackinac County making that funding very important.

Adjourn

There being no further business, **Chair Buckingham** thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the meeting at 8:50pm Eastern.