

FOREST MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

July 15, 2020

FMAC MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr. Jeff Stampfly, Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR)
Mr. Scott Robbins, Michigan Forest Products Council
Mr. Gary Melow (Chair), Michigan Biomass
Mr. Warren Suchovsky, Suchovsky Logging
Ms. Makhayla LaButte (for Amy Trotter), Michigan United Conservation Clubs of Michigan
Dr. Richard Kobe, Michigan State University (MSU)

FMAC ADVISORS IN ATTENDANCE

Dr. Mark Rudnicki (for Dr. Andrew Storer), Michigan Technological University
Ms. Leslie Auriemmo, USDA-Forest Service, Huron-Manistee

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr. Jason Stephens, MDNR

- I. **Welcome** – Gary Melow, Chair
Chair Melow called the July 15, 2020 Forest Management Advisory Committee (FMAC or Committee) meeting to order at 1:09 p.m. He thanked all for attending.
- II. **Consent Agenda**
 - **Adoption of the July 15, 2020 Forest Management Advisory Committee FMAC Agenda**
Motion on Consent Agenda – passed
 - **Adoption of the April 15, 2020 FMAC Meeting Minutes**
Motion to Consent Minutes - passed
- III. **Public Comments**
None
- IV. **Update on New Members**
 - **Chair Melow** said the FMAC is looking to fill two vacancies. An invitation went to Kenny Kwawsczyk and Andrea Ketchmark both with North Country Trails Association. An acceptance was received from Mr. Kwawsczyk. **Chair Melow** has not heard back from Ms. Ketchmark. He will reach out to both individuals again to bring them up-to-speed on the FMAC and see if there is any interest from Ms. Ketchmark. These positions are appointed by the Director of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources' (MDNR). A notice went out to both individuals two days ago. The FMAC is possibly looking to add only one member to the Committee at this time. **Mr. Jeff Stampfly**, MDNR, suggested giving Ms. Ketchmark another few days to respond.

Both Mr. Kwawsczyk and Ms. Ketchmark are from non-motorized user groups and were referred as potential candidates for the FMAC by the MDNR's Parks and

Recreation Division (PRD). Discussion was held regarding how to reach out to motorized groups and whether the FMAC prefers to look for one or two additional members. It was suggested that if the Committee would like to fill two seats, they could go back to PRD to get a recommendation for someone belonging to a motorized group. A comment was made that the most recent complaints are from the non-motorized category. The FMAC also discussed whether it only needs one seat filled to meet FMAC requirements, and whether it would be acceptable to add a second seat. They also discussed whether it would be allowed in the Bylaws and the fact that at the April FMAC meeting the interest was to appoint someone from a trails group.

Mr. Scott Robbins, Michigan Forest Products Council, reminded the Committee that he will be retiring in September.

Chair Melow reviewed the Bylaws. There is no set number for membership, so the FMAC will be looking at a single vacancy. Committee members have contacted two people to fill that vacancy, and one has accepted. **Mr. Stampfly** asked what happens if they both want to represent from the same organization. The response was that since both candidates applied, the Committee would look at the strengths and weaknesses they each bring to the group and then the committee would decide. **Chair Melow** said he would reach out and have conversations with both, and perhaps the FMAC could work with both individuals and decide who would be best for the position.

It was asked what the FMAC's thoughts are on someone from motorized. The response was that the Committee has always had someone from the snowmobile and off-road vehicle (ORV) groups. **Mr. Stampfly** mentioned that the line has blurred between ORV and snowmobile. The Snowmobile Advisory Workgroup or the Off-Road Vehicle Advisory Workgroup, both of which are subcommittees to the Trail Advisory Workgroup, may be able to provide motorized representation.

Mr. Robbins MOTIONED to find someone from the motorized recreational group and to reach out to them through PRD. **Mr. Suchovsky** SECONDED. All in favor – All / No opposing.

V. State Foresters Report – Mr. Jeff Stampfly – Legislative Updates / Chair Melow – Timber Advisory Council Update

1. There was a question about signage for the Walters Research Project. **Mr. Stampfly** reached out to someone in the Forestry Research Project. How do we prevent it from being vandalized? How are they maintained? This was not pursued any further as far as assigning the sites.
2. **Mr. Stampfly** provided a quick update on current legislative activities. There are a few that have implications for the Forest Resources Division (FRD). Mr. Stampfly encouraged people to review them. Mr. Stampfly brought the Committee's attention to a couple of line items to look at:
 - a. March 19, 2020 - House Bill 5540 – Restrictions on HB5540 which requires warrants for the DNR to enter upon private property.
 - b. March 19, 2020 - House Bills 5592-5594 – creates an Upper Peninsula Natural Resources Commission.

- c. March 19, 2020 – House Bill 5333 – places restrictions on Forest Development Fund monies.
- d. June 11, 2020 - House Bill 5777 alters the time to do land transactions; HB 5773 from modifies the membership of the NRC.

Mr. Suchovsky mentioned the color of paint (purple) and that there is a need to educate the public on what purple paint means. What is the need of the paint? It must be reapplied frequently. The downside of the paint is forgetting to mark the lines. **Chair Melow** will circulate the House Bill links to the committee members.

- 3. **Chair Melow** mentioned that the Timber Advisory Council changed its name to Timber and Forest Products Advisory Council (council) late last year. The council continues to reorganize. Mr. JR Richardson resigned from the committee to take a position on the NRC so there is a leadership change. There are two new members: Glen Mroz and Julie Penrose. They will be filling in vacancy seats. John Walters was on the council but took a job elsewhere. The council is collecting data regarding the forest products industry economics. He said the “dashboard” is still being developed. The council is trying to put that all together for the dashboard pages, and additional information.
- 4. **Mr. Stampfly**
 - a. Reported division-specific that most of the forestry staff are out in the field, whereas other staff are either in the field working or teleworking. There is very minimal time being spent in an office. To date there have been 159 fires on 635 acres, which is slightly down from last year. The large fire was in Grayling; around 100 acres burned over Memorial Day weekend.
 - b. Regarding timber, extensions were provided that were expiring. The markets are in different places. There are mills closing in Minnesota and Wisconsin; the MDNR’s Forest Resources Division (FRD) is expecting that volume to happen in Michigan. This has not been reflected in sales. There is still no market. Target: the FRD may get north of 50,000 acres prepped. It lost time to COVID. The FRD did get contracting done but it is still a little early to provide final numbers.
 - c. Forest Health Issues – there is no approval for flying; the FRD is working on trying to get through it, but it’s hard to maintain 6-foot social distancing on a plane.
 - d. There are also no wildlife surveys being done.
 - e. The Forest Action Plan for the fall will soon be completed.
 - f. The July 24 update landscape assessment will be done.
 - g. Reported on the Good Neighbor Authority (GNA): it’s only down 10%; some got contracted. The FRD was able to kick GNA into next year.
 - h. Layoffs resulted in everyone being furloughed for 10 weeks.
 - i. The MDNR does not know what the new budget will be.

VI. Action Items - None

VII. Standing Discussion Items

- Trails – none
- Parks – had a hard time getting operations up and running due to COVID.
- District Offices – none
- Sales Prep numbers – discussed earlier
- Timber sales – nothing updated other than extensions. Sales are selling; prep work is ongoing. The FRD was able to restart the VMS program. There is a large computer system that the FRD uses but it was put on pause when COVID hit. Since then the division was able to restart and is now moving forward. There is a new web-based computer program to be used to prepare and sell timber; it's communicating with the inventory system to bring in volumes, species, etc. It will also run with the entire sale prep software. A customer portal will be available as well.

FMAC Member Program Updates

- **Rich Kobe, MSU Department of Forestry - Dr. Kobe** (1) announced that Michigan State University (MSU) hired a new Economist in the Department of Forestry, Raju Pokharel. Raju and Jagdish have worked together in the past. He will look at supply and the markets. He will join the MSU faculty in August; (2) MSU has been planning for and researching COVID; (3) The Michigan Forest Fire Institute is going forward with the Mass Timber Summit. It will be a virtual meeting scheduled for three mornings starting on September 22, September 29 and October 6. There will be a fair number of people involved from MSU using the Mass Timber Building on campus. They wanted to make it as interactive as possible by letting people see what a mass timber building looks like. The building was behind in opening for about one month because of the Governor's first executive order. They are probably behind a little bit but are still planning on opening the building for courses to be taught in, in January 2021.
- **Ms. Leslie Auriemmo, Huron-Manistee National Forest. – Ms. Auriemmo** (1) reported that they are proceeding with getting most people back to work and putting up sales. They did reduce what they will be producing this year because of COVID. Recreation use has skyrocketed because of COVID. River use has gone up as well as dispersed recreation because the forest was never closed; (2) They are looking forward to the American Outdoors Act. The Act passed in the Senate and hopefully will pass in the House; (3) Forest services will be in first year \$220 million; (4) They are still interested in shared stewardship and would like to work together more; (5) They hired three new foresters from the Society of American Foresters Convention. June graduates will be eligible to apply for those positions; would like to hire folks out of Michigan. **Ms. Auriemmo** also mentioned that the NWTF laid off 50 people as well.
- **Mr. Ben Schram, Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development – Mr. Schram** (1) updated the committee on the Qualified Forest Program. The Forest Property Tax Program is for people who own 24 acres or more of land. Estimates for this year are close to 50,000 acres. It is hard to tell if COVID influenced that or not. (2) The Michigan Association of Conservation Districts hosted a virtual meeting recently. They liked the virtual meeting and will move

forward in the fall doing a virtual convention as well; these may be coupled with annual meetings. (3) Mr. Schram also mentioned that the Ruffed Grouse Society has undergone a serious reconstruction. The society removed all Biologists and hired Foresters to work with private landowners. They are relying on timber sales. The private landowners are commenting on this restructure.

- **Mr. Scott Robbins, Michigan Forest Products Council – Mr. Robbins** (1) is working on a national online training program with MSU forestry. (2) Is in the process of developing a white paper to go national; it is still in the infancy stage. (3) Trying to figure out non-conformance that MDNR received – working on how to fix it. Michigan does not have a plan to monitor long-term plan practices. (4) COVID is a major issue in the industry – factories, workplaces and offices. A paper mill in Wisconsin will be shutting down. There is a Minnesota mill closing indefinitely due to COVID. (5) Mr. Robbins will be retiring in September.
- **Ms. Makhayla LaButte (for Amy Trotter), Michigan United Conservation Clubs of Michigan (MUCC) - Ms. LaButte** reported that (1) MUCC Habitat Fund has been delayed due to COVID; (2) There is a slow start; no one is in the field. A good number of things have been canceled; (3) MUCC has been on the policy front passing through the state; (4) Hoping to get back in the field soon.
- **Mr. Warren Suchovsky, Suchovsky Logging – Mr. Suchovsky** (1) provided an update on the Michigan Master Logger Program. It is going to change in administration; Mr. Don Peterson will be leaving by the end of July. Michigan Association of Timbermen will be taking over beginning in August. Currently, there are 80 master loggers in Michigan. Ten people applied last year and did not complete the application process. (2) Mill closures are on the radar screen.
- **Chair Gary Melow, Michigan Biomass – Chair Melow** reported that Cadillac has a full fuel yard. They are getting the boiler lit; In June, Grayling finished its major outage; the system went down on July 3.
- **Dr. Mark Rudnicki, Michigan Technological University – Dr. Rudnicki** had nothing to report other than he was sitting in for Dr. Andrew Storer.

VIII. Next Meeting Date

- Meeting Date: October 14, 2020
- Location or means to be determined. Hoping to be able to again meet face-to-face.

IX. Future Agenda Items

- None

Chair Melow adjourned the July 15 FMAC meeting at 2:10 p.m.