



## MICHIGAN NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND

### BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

**Minutes of February 16, 2022**

9:00 AM

Okemos Conference Center

Chair Cummings called the meeting of the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) Board of Trustees (Board) to order at 9:00 a.m., Wednesday, February 16, 2022, and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

#### I. INTRODUCTIONS

The following Board members were present:

Sam Cummings, Chair; from the City of Grand Rapids, Kent County  
Steve Hamp, Vice-Chair; from the City of Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County  
Dr. Brandy Brown; from the City of Kalamazoo, Kalamazoo County  
Bill Rustem; from Alaiedon Township, Ingham County  
Dan Eichinger, DNR Director; from the Village of Lake Isabella, Isabella County

Sam Cummings announced he is the new Chair of the MNRTF Board for 2022 and is honored to serve in this position. Steve Hamp has been appointed as the Vice-Chair for 2022.

Dan Lord, Grants Management Section Manager, Department of Natural Resources (DNR), introduced himself. The following staff also introduced themselves: Jon Mayes, Recreation Grants Program Manager; Mike Chuff, MNRTF Financial Specialist; Andrea Stay, Lindsay Ross, Merrie Carlock, and Alexandria McBride, Grant Coordinators; and Erin Campbell, Conversion Officer.

Also participating were various staff members of the DNR and other interested parties.

##### a. Introduction of New Board Member, Dr. Brandy Brown

Chair Cummings introduced Dr. Brandy Brown, the newest Board member that was recently appointed as Erin McDonough's successor. Dr. Brown then shared her background.

Dr. Brown earned a doctoral degree at Western Michigan University, and is the Chief Innovation Officer at Walker-Miller Energy Services. She was born and raised in Kalamazoo, Michigan, where generations of her family have resided for many years. She temporarily moved to D.C. but returned to Michigan to raise her family on 40 acres near other nature preserves and natural areas, with hunting and fishing being a huge tradition in her family. She thanked the Board and staff for their warm welcome, and thanked Erin McDonough for her comments and encouragement. She looks forward to learning about the program, engaging with the Board, the Director, and department staff, and hearing from local communities. She already realizes how this Board listens to and values local communities by providing opportunities for people to get outdoors and enjoy nature.

All Board members and staff welcomed Dr. Brown to the Board.

## II. RECOGNITION OF ERIN McDONOUGH

Chair Cummings announced the MNRTF Board would like to recognize Erin McDonough, former Board member and Chair. He commented that part of being involved with the MNRTF Board and the program includes the opportunity to work with extraordinary people and getting to know them on a personal and professional level. The Board is grateful to Erin for her dedication to the MNRTF, the department, and the citizens of this state, and owe her a debt of gratitude for her service.

Director Eichinger commented that Erin has been with the Board for eight years. She has had a tough, but fair, perspective on staying honest and true to the MNRTF and what the program means to the people of the State of Michigan.

Steve Hamp commented that he, Bill Rustem, and Erin go back a long way. Erin's intimate knowledge of all the recreational sites around the state is profound. Hamp and Rustem expressed their sentiments and will also miss Erin's presence on the Board.

Erin McDonough first congratulated Dr. Brown on her appointment to the Board as her successor. Her hope for Dr. Brown is that she will embrace and enjoy working with the Board and the staff, and will continue to make a tremendous impact to the Board, the program, and the citizens of this state. She also thanked Dan Lord and his staff for the years working with them on a personal and professional level.

Erin reflected on her years with MUCC, the Michigan Oil and Gas Association, and the MNRTF Board. She has seen the MNRTF program through three different lenses and commented that it is the standard for how we should build programs and find solutions. She has seen how the program has been connected to a higher purpose through planning and lining it up with the department's goals and priorities. The MNRTF program has come a long way and has shaped itself as something that really advances Michigan as a whole.

Erin reminded the Board that this program has had a positive effect on people and communities, especially since the onset of the pandemic, by allowing opportunities to recharge and reconnect with nature. The legacy is awe-inspiring, and she is looking forward to getting back to on-the-ground activities herself. Erin closed by stating it has been her utmost pleasure to be a member of the Board. Her hope is that the Board and staff will continue to talk about its history as new people come to the table.

Director Eichinger presented Erin with the department's white pine plaque, which is the traditional way the department acknowledges people for their public service, support, and engagement with the department's programs.

## III. ADOPTION OF MINUTES FOR MEETING OF DECEMBER 1, 2021

Chair Cummings called for adoption of the minutes for the December 1, 2021, MNRTF Board meeting.

**MOVED BY EICHINGER, SUPPORTED BY RUSTEM, TO ADOPT THE  
MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 1, 2021, MNRTF BOARD MEETING.  
MOTION PASSED WITHOUT DISSENTING VOTE.**

Director Eichinger asked for a pause to allow Dr. Brown the opportunity to address the Board and staff under item I.a. of the Agenda.

#### IV. ADOPTION OF AGENDA FOR MEETING OF FEBRUARY 16, 2022

Chair Cummings called for adoption of the agenda for the February 16, 2022, MNRTF Board meeting.

**MOVED BY HAMP, SUPPORTED BY EICHINGER, TO ADOPT THE AGENDA FOR THE FEBRUARY 16, 2022, MNRTF BOARD MEETING. MOTION PASSED WITHOUT DISSENTING VOTE.**

#### V. PUBLIC COMMENT

Chris Bunch, Executive Director, Six Rivers Land Conservancy

Chris Bunch thanked the Board and department staff for their time and continued efforts in keeping the public engaged in the grant process. Chris also thanked Erin for her service on the Board and the opportunity to engage with her for many years. He also commented on how nice it was to attend this meeting in an area where he grew up and used to hunt as a young man. Being in the Okemos area again has brought back a lot of memories, and reminded him why he got involved in preserving land and natural areas.

Chris also reported they had two closings in December and one in January. They protected 279 acres worth of rural investment. One closing involved 235 acres that includes a tamarack bog, Stony Creek, endangered species habitat, and is an addition to a park in Oakland Township. The Chesterfield Salt River Nature Center is a forested floodplain and is now permanently protected, and they also completed the North Channel project with St. Clair County, which will provide non-motorized launching capacity and expand access. Six Rivers is also working on a project on the Rouge River, and another project in Highland Township. They will be presenting these projects to the Board later this year.

He welcomed Dr. Brown and thanked her for her commitment to serve on the Board.

Steve Hamp thanked Chris and congratulated him on being an articulate voice on land preservation in highly populated areas. He commented that Chris has become a leading voice for the southern part of the state.

Clay Summers, Executive Director, and Kyle Langlois, Public Policy Committee Chair; mParks

Kyle Langlois addressed the Board, on behalf of the 3,000+ mParks (Michigan Recreation and Park Association) members statewide, with a formal letter thanking the Board for their 2021 recommendations in support of an impressive number of projects, and for their support throughout the years. He further stated that the Board continues to display the value and importance it places on parks and recreation facilities across the state, and in supporting local municipalities in achieving their goals. mParks also applauds the Board for their continued vision of providing a better future for Michigan's residents and visitors. The letter will be included in the official records of the Board.

Clay Summers also announced that, in addition to the thank you letter, mParks would like to formally recognize the Board at their annual conference on March 8, 2022, by presenting them with their "Grand Award" for the incredible work the Board does as an organization, and as a body that represents the department, the mParks members, and the residents of this state. Chair Cummings thanked mParks for this recognition and commented that these resources belong to the people of the State of Michigan; the Board is just a body that represents these various organizations and

communities. He stated he would be honored to accept the award on behalf of the Board and the people of the state, and thanked mParks for being such a great partner.

Clay also thanked Dan Lord and his exceptional staff for the hard work, dedication, and support to the Board, local communities, and the mParks members. They have heard nothing but high praises from local communities. They are the wheels that make this whole program a success.

Bill Rustem also asked that mParks remind its membership at their conference about the importance of acquiring and preserving lands and open spaces as they are key to the future of our current and future generations. Clay agreed and offered to assist the Board in getting this message relayed to others.

## VI. NEW BUSINESS

### a. Current Status on Conversions

Erin Campbell, DNR Conversion Officer, explained that a conversion happens when a grant-assisted site or a portion of that site is changed from public outdoor recreation. It can also happen if rights in land are transferred/sold. When a site is grant-assisted it becomes encumbered for public outdoor recreation in perpetuity. If that use changes, a conversion has occurred. Conversions have a negative effect on communities' likelihood of receiving future grants. Erin provided a conversion status overview and answered questions from the Board.

Dan Lord thanked Erin for providing the update. In addition to handling the Invasive Species Grant Program, Erin spends part of her time working with local communities on conversions and represents the department well.

### b. Continued Dialogue on Funding History

Dan Lord addressed the Board regarding the information, maps, and statistics staff provided to the Board last year to give them an overview of how much funding a community has received, or not received, over the past five years. The information was provided to assist the Board in making grant funding decisions at the end of the year, especially on the development side. Dan asked the Board if they would like to continue to receive this information. The Board agreed they would like to continue to receive this information.

### c. 2021 Recommendations in Mapped Format

Alexandria McBride presented information to the Board highlighting the acquisition and development grant projects that were recommended by the Board at their December 2021 meeting, and where they were awarded geographically within the grant service regions. In 2021, the Board recommended 22 acquisition projects totaling \$22.3 million, and 95 development projects totaling \$23.3 million.

Various board members provided comments and Director Eichinger commented that the northeast region has its challenges in acquisition and development but, in the universe of grant making, it is a region that does well in other areas, such as Great Lakes fisheries. It is a region that competes very well for habitat work, stream connectivity, fisheries, and wildlife habitat. The region has huge amounts of public land and forested areas, but the northeast also has thousands of acres of flood zones, as well as large areas of privately owned lands (i.e. hunt clubs), which helps to explain why there are somewhat fewer acquisition and development projects in the region.

d. Status of MNRTF Appropriation Bill

Mike Chuff reported that the MNRTF supplemental appropriations bill was submitted to the State Budget Office two weeks ago. It is now at the Legislative level.

Director Eichinger commented that in some years the bill has moved quickly through the legislative process, while in other years it has moved slowly, so it is difficult to predict when the bill will move forward. The Director will notify the Board of action on the bill.

e. 2021 MNRTF Annual Report

Jon Mayes reported that the 2021 MNRTF Annual Report is complete. Hard copies were provided to the Board members, with additional copies available for the public attendees. The report has also been posted on the MNRTF Board's website.

f. Workshop Webinar Summary

Lindsay Ross reported that staff held a virtual Grant Workshop on February 1, 2022. They hold these workshops every year to help communities better understand the programs. This year they covered What's New, Grant Basics, How to Apply for Grants, and Scoring. The workshop covered all three grant programs, including Recreation Passport, MNRTF, and Land and Water Conservation grants. This year there were a total of 334 participants, with 69% of attendees representing local or state units of government, and 85% who have previously applied for grants.

Lindsay further reported that staff will conduct a workshop at the upcoming mParks conference in March, along with giving a presentation on Tips for Managing Your DNR Recreation Grant and the MNRTF Roundtable discussion.

g. Withdrawal of Projects

Jon Mayes reported that the DNR Wildlife Division requested two project withdrawals. Per the Chair's request, Jon explained the project withdrawal process for the new Board member and the reasons that an agency may request withdrawal. Withdrawals can occur if it is determined that the project no longer fulfills the mission of the department, or the property gets sold to a private party.

The two projects submitted for withdrawal include:

- TF17-0212 - Muskegon State Game Area Land Acquisition Initiative, DNR Wildlife Division (Newaygo County); Grant Remaining: \$191,893.14
- TF19-0143 – Stanton State Game Area Acquisition, DNR Wildlife Division (Montcalm County); Grant Remaining: \$545,143.14

Both withdrawals total \$737,036.28.

Chair Cummings called for a motion to accept the withdrawal of both projects.

**MOVED BY HAMP, SUPPORTED BY EICHINGER, TO ADOPT WITHDRAWAL OF TF17-0212, MUSKEGON STATE GAME AREA LAND ACQUISITION INITIATIVE; AND TF19-0143, STANTON STATE GAME AREA ACQUISITION. MOTION PASSED WITHOUT DISSENTING VOTE.**

h. MNRTF Board Roundtable at mParks Annual Conference; March 8, 2022

Jon Mayes reminded the Board that the MNRTF Roundtable discussion at the upcoming mParks conference will occur on March 8, 2022. Chair Cummings accepted the opportunity to participate in the panel discussion. Director Eichinger also offered to participate in the panel discussion with Chair Cummings since he will be attending part of the conference.

i. Update on MNRTF Staff Activities

Dan Lord reported that Sharon Schafer, the chief of the DNR Finance and Operations Division, retired on January 14, 2022. Erik Eklund has been appointed as the new chief of the division. Erik also realigned the division and the Assistant Chief position so that he can continue to focus on the department's budget. As a result, Dan Lord will be working out-of-class (temporary assignment) as the division's Assistant Chief, overseeing real estate, grants, statewide facilities, oil, gas and other mineral exploration, and day-to-day operations. Although Dan will still be involved with grants and the MNRTF, Michael Chuff has been assigned as the working out-of-class Grants Section Manager.

Michael Chuff reported that staff are currently working on the five-year recreation plan review process. April 1 is the deadline for submitting grant applications, so staff will be gearing up for application reviews once the deadline has passed. Currently, 60 applications have been received but they typically receive around 150 each year. Enhancements to the MiGrants on-line system are ongoing and they continue to build on and improve the system. Finally, they are still in the planning stages for the April MNRTF Board meeting. Staff are waiting to hear if MSU will reopen their doors. Mike will update the Board once a venue has been secured.

Director Eichinger commented on the departure of Sharon Schafer. She was a fantastic colleague and will be greatly missed by her staff and the department. Sharon built a tremendous team in Finance and Operations, which consists of procurement, grants, real estate, field operations, budget, central support, minerals, administration, and customer service. In turn, Erik Eklund brings a tremendous amount of knowledge and expertise to the chief position and will continue to manage the department's budget, with a very qualified Assistant Chief, Dan Lord, by his side. Dan Lord has created a tremendous team in the Grants Section, which will lead to Michael Chuff doing an excellent job in leading that team as well. The transition has been seamless, which is a credit to those that are stepping into their new roles.

VII. BOARD PACKET REFERENCE MATERIALS

Michael Chuff reminded the Board that all remaining meeting materials are contained in the Board's packet of materials and will entertain any questions about those materials.

Chair Cummings asked the Board if they had any questions about the remaining meeting materials. No discussion of the meeting materials took place.

VIII. OTHER MATTERS AS PROPERLY BROUGHT BEFORE THE BOARD

Chair Cummings commented that, since this is his last year with the Board, he is offering to host the June MNRTF Board meeting in Saugatuck. He is working on those details and a venue, and will coordinate with staff to solidify those plans. He encourages all Board members and staff to attend.

Dan Lord explained that the Board typically has two meetings across the state, which will consist of a Tuesday/Wednesday session, with tours of MNRTF sites occurring on Tuesday and the Board

meeting occurring on Wednesday. The other out-of-Lansing meeting will occur in August. A location has yet to be determined, but they are proposing northern Michigan.

Director Eichinger also reported that, last week, the Governor presented her state budget and, yesterday, the department had its first house appropriations subcommittee hearing to start the process for the department's budget. The department's fiscal year 2023 proposed budget is at \$534 million, which includes a 100% increase in the General Fund. Most of the General Fund appropriations will be one-time appropriations, but they will allow the department to address significant infrastructure improvements, to include a complete overhaul of the state fish hatcheries and a new research vessel for continued Great Lakes studies on Lake Michigan. He also reported that they should start seeing movement on the three-bill package that includes the \$250 million for state park infrastructure improvements, the \$150 million for local parks and recreation projects, and \$500 million that would be deposited into the State Park Endowment Fund to bring it to its \$800 million cap, which is a topic of discussion for this Board and what it will mean operationally. The Director will keep the Board apprised of any appropriation or supplemental bill movement. He closed by stating that the department is getting close to their limit on their ability to administer all these grant dollars, but they will figure out a way to do it and do it with excellence.

The Board expressed their excitement about these additional dollars that are coming into the department, and for the additional grant funding to local communities.

The Director also mentioned he would like to have the sprint team give a presentation to the Board on the model/process they have been using to address these additional dollars for the department and administration of grants to local communities.

Rich Bowman, with The Nature Conservancy, commented that his organization has been doing reconnaissance and having discussions with communities to support the additional funding that will be coming to their communities, building on the success of Proposal 1.

#### IX. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chair Cummings announced the next meeting of the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board is scheduled for April 20, 2022, beginning at 9:00 a.m. Information on the location of the meeting will be posted on the Board's [website](#).

#### X. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Cummings asked for additional comments or discussion. None were offered.

The meeting adjourned at 10:35 a.m.



Sam Cummings, Chairperson  
Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board  
of Trustees



Michael Chuff, Acting Manager  
Grants Management Section  
DNR Finance and Operations Division

DATE: 04/25/2022