



## MICHIGAN NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND

### BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

Minutes of February 17, 2021  
Virtual Webinar Meeting  
9:00 AM



Dan Lord, Grants Management Section Manager, Department of Natural Resources (DNR), provided an overview to all participants on how the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board's virtual webinar meeting will be conducted and how to navigate the screens.

Chair McDonough called the meeting of the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) Board of Trustees (Board) to order at 9:00 a.m., Wednesday, February 17, 2021.

#### I. INTRODUCTIONS

The following Board members remotely participated in this meeting, as permitted under Public Act 228 of 2020 and DNR Policy 17.01-07, from the following locations in the State of Michigan:

Erin McDonough, Chair; City of Lansing, Ingham County  
Sam Cummings, Vice-Chair; City of Grand Rapids, Kent County  
Steve Hamp; City of Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County  
Bill Rustem; Alaiedon Township, Ingham County  
Dan Eichinger, DNR Director; Village of Lake Isabella, Isabella County

Dan Lord introduced himself and Grants Management staff: Jon Mayes, Recreation Unit and MNRTF Grants Program Manager; Mike Chuff, MNRTF Financial Specialist; Erin Campbell, Invasive Species Grant Program Manager and Conversion Officer; Merrie Carlock, Lindsay Ross and Andrea Stay, Grant Coordinators; and Yolanda Taylor, interim Administrative Assistant to staff and the Board. He also introduced Erik Eklund, Chief Budget Officer, Finance and Operations Division, who will address the MNRTF Financial Update or other budget questions.

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

#### II. ADOPTION OF MINUTES FOR MEETING OF DECEMBER 2, 2020

Chair McDonough called for adoption of the minutes for the December 2, 2020 MNRTF Board meeting.

**MOVED BY HAMP, SUPPORTED BY EICHINGER, TO ADOPT THE MINUTES  
OF THE DECEMBER 2, 2020 MNRTF BOARD MEETING.  
MOTION PASSED WITHOUT DISSENTING VOTE.**

#### III. ADOPTION OF AGENDA FOR MEETING OF FEBRUARY 17, 2021

Chair McDonough amended the February 17, 2021 agenda to reflect:

- Item IV – Public Comment; Mark Lagerwey, Alliance for Economic Success, will be replacing and speaking on behalf of Jason Aric Jones.

Chair McDonough called for the adoption of the amended agenda for the February 17, 2021 MNRTF Board meeting.

**MOVED BY RUSTEM, SUPPORTED BY HAMP, TO ADOPT THE AGENDA WITH AMENDMENTS FOR THE FEBRUARY 17, 2021 MNRTF BOARD MEETING.  
MOTION PASSED WITHOUT DISSENTING VOTE.**

IV. 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. He also commented that, although the meeting/trip to the Detroit area was postponed in 2020 due to the pandemic, he remains optimistic that Six Rivers can host the Board in 2021, possibly for their October meeting. He will continue to monitor the situation with Dan Lord to determine if or when the Board and staff may be able to travel and meet in person, but he assures the Board that they are ready and will have safety protocols in place for their visit.

Bunch also commented on the passage of Proposal 1 and how important it is to southern Michigan communities to continue to have access to public lands, the natural resources and public outdoor recreation. Proposal 1 will give the Board latitude to act more expeditiously and make funding for development projects available. He noted that, while development projects are important, it is the acquisition of new lands that leads to more development of recreational opportunities. He asked the Board to consider these options when making their decisions this year on where the dollars would best be spent, especially with the new formula and possibly new scoring criteria.

Chair McDonough responded that the Board understands the need for balance between acquisition and development projects. This year, staff will be bringing data points to the Board where they will spend a lot of time reflecting on where funding has been provided in the past, and where it should be provided moving forward.

Dan Lord also commented that revisions to the scoring criteria took place in 2019 with public input. Staff are still evaluating two types of scoring criteria, but this is something that will be reviewed throughout the year. Later in the meeting, staff will revisit historical data on where the dollars have been allocated over the past five to ten years.

Mark Lagerwey, Alliance for Economic Success

Mark Lagerwey announced he is filling in for Jason Aric Jones, Advocacy Director for the Michigan Mountain Biking Association, who is also a member of the department's Non-Motorized Trail Advisory workgroup. Lagerwey works for the Alliance for Economic Success in the Cadillac region. He also works for Baker College in program development and other areas.

Lagerwey discussed the hugely popular new mode of trail riding, fat tire bikes. They adapt well to all seasons and make trails more accessible to the large group of trail riders. He mentioned the Cadillac Pathway, which was developed almost 40 years ago as a cross-country ski pathway but eventually morphed into a single-track pathway for fat tire bikes.

Jones and Lagerwey are working with Missaukee County on reapplying for a development grant for a single-track pathway. It is their hope (as well as the mountain biking community) that the Board will consider funding for the development and maintenance of single-track pathways. They are used more frequently than the rail-trails and are about 1/10<sup>th</sup> the cost. It is also a very important part of Michigan recreation.

Chair McDonough responded that the Board toured a single-track pathway in Bellaire that was funded by the MNRTF. Just to see how they develop and maintain these trails and manage erosion was very fascinating. She assured Lagerwey that the mountain biking community has been heard and thanked him for his comments.

Barbara Barber, Historic Preservation Planner, Oakland Charter Township Historic District Commission

Barbara Barber stated she would like to comment on the definition of natural resource-based outdoor recreation. The Board has been very generous to their community, but she is confused as to why her programs do not fall within these guidelines or definition.

Barber works for the Oakland Charter Township Historic District Commission (commission). The Cranberry Lake Farm Historic District consists of 16 acres and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The historic district is housed within the larger 213-acre Cranberry Lake Park. The district is complete with multiple historic buildings that represent the local history of agricultural farming, and the park also serves as a retreat for hunting and recreation. The commission maintains all the buildings and grounds within the historic district and offer numerous educational and recreational programs.

The commission recently applied for a grant but did not receive any points for their outdoor recreational programs. They offer many programs, activities and events to all ages and have a diverse interest in their recreational and educational opportunities. In the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, it talks about providing quality experiences for outdoor recreation. In the Executive Summary it states how to “Protect and manage Michigan’s diverse and abundant natural and cultural assets to provide relevant, quality experiences that meet the fun, relaxation, and health needs of Michigan’s residents and visitors and support economic prosperity.”

The commission offers beekeeping programs, outdoor painting workshops, nest box monitoring, fruit tree care and pruning, work with scout groups, and hold events like hayrides, etc. They would also like to install an accessible pathway to all the buildings that offer these programs. She was told that these are considered leisure activities, but they also represent outdoor programs that people enjoy. She asks that the Board consider these types of outdoor activities and not simply focus on hunting, fishing, kayaking and the like as the only forms of outdoor recreation. The definition of outdoor recreation should also include what that means to those that take part in differing outdoor activities.

She also thanked Jon Mayes for reaching out to discuss this with her and provide some insight and advice on future grant applications.

Chair McDonough thanked Barber for her comments. She stated that this is a very competitive grant program. Staff and stakeholders have put a lot of work into the scoring criteria. However, she encouraged Barber to continue to work with staff on future funding opportunities and how she can possibly score higher on a future grant application.

Chair McDonough asked if there were any additional public comments. There were no additional requests.

## V. NEW BUSINESS

### Recent Updates on the Open Meetings Act

Dan Lord reminded the Board that Trevor VanDyke provided a thorough overview of changes to the Open Meetings Act (OMA) in December. The OMA was amended with some aspects that will sunset at the end of March as it pertains to virtual/remote meeting options. The department continues to have discussions with the Attorney General's Office and other entities as to when the OMA or virtual settings will expire or be updated. If the Board is required to return to in-person meetings they would have to be conducted in accordance with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines. In the meantime, staff will reach out to various venues to determine availability and their protocols if the Board were to resume in-person meetings.

### Grant Workshop Summary

Lindsay Ross gave the Board an update on the grant workshops that were held this year. Historically, staff would typically travel around the state to conduct grant workshops. However, due to the pandemic and travel restrictions, 2021 was the first time they held all workshops virtually.

The virtual workshops in 2021 were held on January 21, and on February 3 as part of the mParks annual conference. Both workshops covered the MNRTF, Recreation Passport and Land and Water Conservation Fund grant programs. Topics included What's New with the grant programs, Grant Basics, how to fill out an application, scoring, and highlighting the improvements and changes to the MiRecGrants program.

Staff conduct a survey every year. Ross reported that attendance has increased significantly. In 2018 they had 215 participants, where in 2021 they had 471 participants (almost double the attendance), which may have something to do with providing the workshop remotely. Sixty-two percent (62%) of attendees this year were local or state units of government, while 25% were those that have never applied for grants in the past. Many responded that the workshops were very valuable, especially for newcomers and being able to put their grant coordinator's names with a face. The survey results also help staff to prepare for and make improvements to future workshops.

Director Eichinger thanked Lindsay and the rest of the grants team for conducting these virtual workshops, for being flexible and reengineering processes to continue to work with and engage the public. Just seeing how much the workshops have grown over the years shows that it is a model that works well, it gets information into the hands of communities looking for grant opportunities and attracts great proposals for the trust fund.

Dan Lord commented that Chair McDonough and Vice-Chair Cummings also virtually participated in the mParks conference for a panel discussion on the trust fund and asked if they would like to share their experiences. Chair McDonough said there were approximately 50 participants and most of the questions were related to the passage of Proposal 1 and how it may affect the program and scoring, how to apply, and general questions about the trust fund. Vice-Chair Cummings said they did speak to the passage of Proposal 1 and how it may provide more flexibility to meet the needs of municipalities, but they also informed them that changes to the program and scoring would evolve over time.

### Recreational Grant Funding to Communities in the Past Five Years

Dan Lord informed the Board that the information/data being presented is the result of the Board's discussions at the December 2020 meeting and their request to see where the dollars have been allocated over the years. Staff will use this data to engage with the Board throughout the year, but he also encouraged Board members to comment on what information/data they would like to see that would assist them in making their decisions moving towards December 2021.

Lindsey Ross presented the data in several different formats for the Board. The data included state and local units of government and regional recreation authorities, and the total sum of MNRTF acquisition and development projects that were funded from 2016 to 2020 in each county of the state. It did not include populations, the exact project location, other grant programs, lapsed funds or withdrawn projects; nor did it include grants that were not funded. The larger bubbles on the map identified those counties that received the largest amount of funding, collectively, over the past five years; smaller bubbles would indicate those counties that have received less funding, collectively. The information could also be broken down to further identify the total funding a county has received for acquisition or development projects, listing all the individual grants and total funding received for each project within that county.

After reviewing all the data, the Board agreed that this is an excellent analysis tool but wondered how they could access this information. Ross responded that it would take a special license to share the data that is available in this program, or she could break it down into spreadsheets for them.

Director Eichinger responded that, moving forward, the Board could let staff know what additional information, data, lenses, filters, or reported information they would like to include in this program. That way the information could be expressed and shared with the Board in various images, printed screens, or reports. It would also be useful in comparing data on different levels. This is something the Board could work on before the next meeting. In the meantime, the department will look at other options or acquiring a Board-specific license to the program.

Lord responded that this was just the first sampling of what type of information could be provided and improved upon to assist the Board in making decisions moving toward the December 2021 meeting. He thanked Lindsey Ross for pulling this data together to provide the information in alternative formats for the Board's information and review.

Cummings asked how the Board intends to use this information. For example, could this information be used as a tie-breaking mechanism or to identify areas that may have been overlooked or left behind.

Director Eichinger responded that it would be useful in identifying counties that, for whatever reason, have not received funding or limited funding in the past to ensure geographic equity, and it could also be a useful tool when making a decision between two or more competitive grants.

After further discussion, the Board would also like to see the relationship of grants to population density.

Chair McDonough had to step away from the meeting so Vice-Chair Cummings continued to chair the meeting.

Vice-Chair Cummings asked if any action was required of the Board at this time. Lord responded that this was just the first attempt and a conversation starter with the Board. However, Board members should submit their requests for additional information to staff so it can be incorporated prior to the next meeting.

Rustem stated he would like to look at the \$300,000 limitation on development grants, and whether it discourages development applications from large urban centers with large parks. Lord suggested they could take development grants that were funded in the last five years and identify how many were awarded in total, how many were right at the \$300,000 maximum, total project costs, and

explore other ways to look at the information. Rustem was comfortable with this approach but wonders if the \$300,000 limit discourages these large urban communities from applying, and how many are split into multiple grants to achieve their ultimate project goals.

Vice-Chair Cummings agreed that the Board should review the impact this limit may be having on larger urban or larger park projects, and does it allow for an equitable allocation of the resources. For example, Grand Rapids is contemplating a significant trail connector project that is larger than the \$300,000 limit. It has a lot of potential but, as opposed to making one application, they are talking about splitting it up into three applications to fit within the \$300,000 limit. The Board should constantly be reviewing and challenging those rules.

Director Eichinger stated he would be interested in seeing the frequency of applications, especially for some of the smaller communities or counties that have received less to no grant awards. It may also be helpful to review the frequency of applications (i.e., to identify the 'frequent flyer' applicants) in comparison to the number of successful grants that have been awarded versus those that have not been awarded. Lord will consider gathering this data, depending on how long they hold onto applications, to look at who they are hearing from and what their success rate is when they apply.

Vice-Chair Cummings asked if there was any further discussion about this data. No additional discussion was offered.

Hamp congratulated staff and feels it will be a very useful tool for the Board moving forward.

#### Annual Summary of Open Conversions

Dan Lord introduced Erin Campbell. She was formerly a grant coordinator but is now the manager of the invasive species program and handles conversions, in addition to other program and managerial duties.

Erin Campbell provided the Board with the annual update on conversions pursuant to MNRTF Board Policy 94.1. She further explained that a conversion of use occurs when one or both of the following situations occur:

- The grant-assisted site, or a portion of the site, is no longer available for public outdoor recreation; or
- Property rights in or control of the grant-assisted site, or a portion of the site, are conveyed by the grantee to another entity, either by deed, grant of easement or other mechanism.

Following determination that a conversion has occurred the department works with the grantee to remedy the conversion according to the DNR Conversion Process Outline.

Campbell reported that the department is currently tracking:

- 35 active conversions in 15 counties; all small conversions (part of a park; not entire park);
- 7 conversions are in process and awaiting action by the local unit of government;
- 28 are in the investigative stage pending additional information (i.e., determining boundaries, reviewing historical files, or awaiting action by the local unit); with
- 29 parks currently impacted.

She also noted that the total number of conversions recorded is larger than the actual number of non-conforming uses due to multiple grants recorded at some locations.

Erin further reported that the total number of MNRTF conversions since 1976 only equals 70 (35 active conversions; 35 resolved conversions). She noted that thousands of MNRTF grants have been awarded over the years. To only have 70 conversions is a really low number. Also, several parks may have multiple grants (i.e., acquisition grant followed by several development or overlapping grants). Of all the conversions, 29 park site conversions are active while 26 park sites have been resolved, with most of those conversions occurring in the Oakland/Livingston region.

Hamp asked which counties are covered by the regions identified. Lord explained that the state is divided into various regions and will provide that map to the Board.

#### Withdrawal of Projects

Jon Mayes, DNR Recreation Grants Unit Manager, gave a brief overview of the following project withdrawal requests:

- TF19-0105, Clarkston Depot Park Accessibility Improvements – Village of Clarkston, Oakland County; Grant Amount: \$50,000.00

The Village of Clarkston identified several factors that caused the city not to move forward with this project.

- TF19-0159, Pipestone Creek/St. Joseph River Public Water Access Site Acquisition – DNR Fisheries Division (Berrien County); Grant Amount: \$92,603.32

The land was sold to a private party before the department had the opportunity to move forward with this acquisition.

Both withdrawals total \$142,603.32.

Vice-Chair Cummings called for a motion to accept the withdrawal of both applications.

**MOVED BY RUSTEM, SUPPORTED BY EICHINGER, TO ADOPT WITHDRAWAL OF TF19-0105, CLARKSTON DEPOT PARK ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS; AND TF19-0159, PIPESTONE CREEK/ST. JOSEPH RIVER PUBLIC WATER ACCESS SITE ACQUISITION. MOTION PASSED WITHOUT DISSENTING VOTE.**

#### Update on MNRTF Staff Activities

Dan Lord thanked staff for their work in providing virtual grant workshops this year, as well as conducting all the Board's meetings in a virtual format. There was a lot of work that went into preparing for and conducting these workshops and meetings in a virtual environment. Lord reported that the MNRTF Annual Report was posted on-line in January and a link to the report was provided to the Board. The report gives a high-level overview of the MNRTF and the work that has been accomplished in the past year. Grant coordinators have been busy working with local units of government and getting their 5-year Recreation Plans submitted by the February 1 deadline. It is an eligibility requirement for communities that want to apply for a grant by the April 1 deadline. Staff are also working behind the scenes to launch the new interface for their on-line system after the April 1 deadline. All grantee's information will be exported to the new program. An overview of the new system was presented during the grant workshops, but staff continue to field questions from applicants and grantees. Interviews have been conducted for the vacant grant coordinator position, a recommendation to offer has been submitted so the position should be filled soon. The new grant coordinator will be introduced to the Board at the April meeting. The section was also granted

authorization to bring back their student so he should be on board in the next couple of weeks as well.

Lord thanked the production crew behind the scenes, Mike Chuff, Lindsay Ross, Jon Mayes, and Yolanda Taylor. It takes a lot of work to get everything prepared, posted, linked, posted on-line, and to conduct these meetings so their work is appreciated.

#### VI. BOARD PACKET REFERENCE MATERIALS

Dan Lord reminded the Board that all remaining meeting materials are listed and linked in the Agenda and will entertain any questions about those materials.

Vice-Chair Cummings asked the Board if they had any questions about the remaining meeting materials. No discussion of the remaining materials was offered.

#### VII. OTHER MATTERS AS PROPERLY BROUGHT BEFORE THE BOARD

None.

#### VIII. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Vice-Chair Cummings announced the next meeting of the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board is scheduled for April 21, 2021, beginning at 9:00 a.m. The format of the meeting will be virtual, and information will be posted on the Board's website.

#### IX. ADJOURNMENT

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

He then asked for a motion to adjourn.

**MOVED BY RUSTEM, SUPPORTED BY HAMP, TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.  
MOTION PASSED WITHOUT DISSENTING VOTE.**

Vice-Chair Cummings thanked the Board members and staff.

The meeting adjourned at 10:10 a.m.



Erin McDonough, Chairperson  
Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund  
Board of Trustees



Dan Lord, Manager  
Grants Management Section  
Finance and Operations Division

April 21st, 2021  
DATE