



MICHIGAN NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

Minutes of June 15, 2022

9:00 AM

The Carriage House at The Felt Estate
Saugatuck, Michigan

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, June 15, 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
William Rustem; from Alaiedon Township, Ingham County
DNR Director Daniel Eichinger, from the Village of Lake Isabella, Isabella County

Michael Chuff, Acting Grants Management Section Manager, introduced himself. He also introduced Dan Lord, Acting Assistant Chief, Finance and Operations Division, Department of Natural Resources (DNR); Jon Mayes, Recreation Grants Manager; Merrie Carlock, Grant Coordinator; and Lance Brooks, MiGrants Administrator, who will be coordinating the meeting and the presentations. Mike also introduced two new grant coordinators to the section, Samantha Davis (northeastern Lower Peninsula region) and Charamy Cleary (southern Lower Peninsula region).

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

Patty Meyer, Felt Estate Director, gave the Board a brief history of the estate and the campaign they started in 2021 to save, acquire, and restore the Carriage House, the mansion, and the entire estate. The [Friends of The Felt Estate](#) is a 501(c)(3). Their mission is to continue to restore and maintain the mansion, through donations and revenues from rentals. She welcomed the Board and guests to the estate.

II. ADOPTION OF MINUTES FOR MEETING OF APRIL 20, 2022

Chair Cummings called for adoption of the minutes for the April 20, 2022, MNRTF Board meeting.

**MOVED BY BROWN, SUPPORTED BY EICHINGER, TO ADOPT THE
MINUTES OF THE APRIL 20, 2022, MNRTF BOARD MEETING.
MOTION PASSED WITHOUT DISSENTING VOTE.**

III. ADOPTION OF AGENDA FOR MEETING OF JUNE 15, 2022

Chair Cummings called for adoption of the agenda for the June 15, 2022, MNRTF Board meeting.

MOVED BY HAMP, SUPPORTED BY RUSTEM, TO ADOPT THE AGENDA FOR THE JUNE 15, 2022, MNRTF BOARD MEETING. MOTION PASSED WITHOUT DISSENTING VOTE.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

Chris Bunch, Executive Director, Six Rivers Land Conservancy, thanked The Nature Conservancy and everybody else involved with yesterday's tour of the Saugatuck area. He also expressed his support for TF22-0048 Village of Beverly Hills – Rouge River Acquisition (Oakland County), and looks forward to presenting another preservation project on the upper region of the Huron River that they have been working on.

Chris also expressed his disappointment that the MNRTF appropriations bill for last year's awards has not passed through the appropriations committees. It is particularly alarming to the communities and asked the Board for their assistance in getting these appropriations through the Legislature.

Chair Cummings echoed his disappointment regarding the MNRTF appropriations bill. He also thanked The Nature Conservancy, the Land Conservancy of West Michigan, and everybody else that participated in hosting and coordinating the tours, transportation, the luncheon, and the evening dinner event

V. PRESENTATIONS FROM 2022 GRANT APPLICANTS

Chair Cummings announced the Board will receive nine presentations on various MNRTF grant applications/projects. He asked that presenters adhere to their ten-minute presentation time.

Questions by the Board were addressed during each presentation.

The June 2022 MNRTF applications presented include:

- a. TF22-0053 City of Saugatuck and TF22-0055 Saugatuck Township – Blue Star Trail Development (Allegan County); *Jerry Donovan, City of the Village of Douglas Mayor; James Sullivan, Friends of the Blue Star Trail; and Birdie Holley, resident/business owner*

TF22-0053 City of Saugatuck		
MNRTF Grant Request:	\$ 300,000	(27%)
Matching Funds:	\$ 830,600	(73%)
Total Project Cost:	\$1,130,600	

TF22-0053 Saugatuck Township		
MNRTF Grant Request:	\$ 300,000	(28%)
Matching Funds:	\$ 778,400	(72%)
Total Project Cost:	\$1,078,400	

- b. TF22-0208 City of Muskegon Heights – Mona Lake Beach Development (Muskegon County); *Troy Bell, City Manager*

MNRTF Grant Request:	\$300,000	(75%)
Matching Funds:	\$100,000	(25%)
Total Project Cost:	\$400,000	

- c. TF22-0125 Kent County – Cannonsburg Recreation (Ski) Area Acquisition (Kent County); *Brian Mulligan, Landscape Architect, Kent County Parks Department*

MNRTF Grant Request:	\$ 7,500,000	(75%)
Matching Funds:	\$ 2,500,000	(25%)
Total Project Cost:	\$10,000,000	

- d. TF22-0145 Pierson Township – Pierson Township Community Park Development (Montcalm County); *Dan Buyze, Township Supervisor; and Sara Burkholder, Township Clerk*

MNRTF Grant Request:	\$300,000	(73%)
Matching Funds:	\$110,000	(27%)
Total Project Cost:	\$410,000	

- e. TF22-0048 Village of Beverly Hills – Rouge River Acquisition (Oakland County); *John George, Village Council President; Kristin Rutkowski, Village Clerk/Assistant Manager; and Brian Marzolf, Land Protection Manager, Six Rivers Land Conservancy*

MNRTF Grant Request:	\$1,500,000	(75%)
Matching Funds:	\$ 500,000	(25%)
Total Project Cost:	\$2,000,000	

- f. TF22-0107 Hamburg Township – Bennett Park Renovation and Water Trail Access (Livingston County); *Mike Dolan, Hamburg Township Clerk*

MNRTF Grant Request:	\$300,000	(60%)
Matching Funds:	\$202,500	(40%)
Total Project Cost:	\$502,500	

The Chair called for a break at 10:25 a.m. The Board reconvened at 10:35 a.m.

- g. TF22-0154 Washtenaw County – Acquisition of the Saline Preserve (Washtenaw County); *Rosie Pahl Donaldson, Park Planner, Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission*

MNRTF Grant Request:	\$ 541,800	(40%)
Matching Funds:	\$ 812,800	(60%)
Total Project Cost:	\$1,354,600	

- h. TF22-0032 Monroe County – Monroe Loop Trail Development (Monroe County); *Michael Bosanac, Administrator/Chief Financial Officer, Monroe County Board of Commissioners*

MNRTF Grant Request:	\$ 300,000	(6%)
Matching Funds:	\$4,449,000	(94%)
Total Project Cost:	\$4,749,000	

- i. TF22-0090 Cass County – Dr. T.K. Lawless Dark Sky Nature Center Development (Cass County); *Scott Wyman, Cass County Parks and Recreation Director*

MNRTF Grant Request:	\$300,000	(47%)
Matching Funds:	\$343,500	(53%)
Total Project Cost:	\$643,500	

Chair Cummings asked if there were any additional comments or questions on the presentations; none were offered.

The Board thanked the presenters, and department staff for coordinating the presentations.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

a. Keweenaw Land Acquisition Update

Helen Taylor, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) State Director, gave the Board an update on the 32,600 acres in the Keweenaw Peninsula that are for sale by a timber investment company, TRG. In partnership with the state, TNC is pursuing partnerships to acquire all of the acreage to get it off the market. They do not intend to keep all the acreage but, instead, will later execute conservation easements and leases to the state and other partners so that the lands remain in public trust for outdoor recreation purposes, in perpetuity. Currently, two appraisals are in motion. Their hope is to negotiate a selling price by the end of the month. Also, TNC Board of Directors approved \$43 million for this acquisition. If they can agree on a price with the seller, they should be able to close rather quickly.

Another key component to this proposed acquisition is the public engagement process. TNC also received a generous grant to support a community engagement process. The Keweenaw Peninsula is becoming overly inundated with recreationists and visitors, which is putting a strain on the local communities' infrastructure, emergency response, and economy. In addition to bringing in some experts that have dealt with communities around the country, they have also had many discussions with the Michigan State Housing and Development Authority, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, the Small Business Association of Michigan, etc. They also hired a facilitator and held four public meetings, which had approximately 50 to 75 people at each session. The groups asked a lot of questions but, in the end, were supportive of the proposed acquisition and plan moving forward. They also sent out surveys to reach those that may not have access to the internet to make public comment (with more than 1,800 responding), and conducted over 60 one-on-one interviews. The goal is conservation, public access, rural prosperity, future use, and community support. They also formed a planning committee with 17 stakeholder groups. This is a different, but extremely interesting, project for TNC.

Scott Whitcomb, DNR Office of Public Lands Director, commented that this project relates to the department's Land Strategy. The strategic goals include economic development, recreation, and land protection, and how that all comes together. This community planning process is a key example. This is a community in transition and will continue to be in transition, so we need to think about affordable housing, infrastructure, and economic prosperity, as well as land protection and how it is going to bring these communities together.

Helen also added that the county and township officials are on board, which is great because they will also become owners and land managers. They are trying to create a model that integrates holistic management and holistic ownership for the good of the whole, and a plan that will outlast elections and changes in leadership into the next 100 years.

b. Status of MNRTF Appropriation Bill (SB 1028)

Michael Chuff reported that Senate Bill 1028 is the MNRTF appropriation bill for the projects that were recommended by the Board in 2021. The bill passed in the Senate on May 18, but it currently sits with the House. He also gave the Board a historical overview of when the MNRTF appropriation bills have typically passed through the Legislature over the past ten years.

Bill Rustem commented that if the bill does not pass within the next few weeks, the Legislature will be on recess and elections are in August and November. mParks, SEMCOG, and other organizations have sent letters or reached out to the Senate and the House to pass this bill so communities can begin to break ground on their projects. Every week that this bill sits, costs are going up for materials, contractors, etc. In past years, the bill has been passed/signed around March, so this is a significant delay.

Director Eichinger also encouraged all grant recipients to make those phone calls to their Legislators requesting they pass the appropriations bill.

c. Status of American Rescue Plan Act Funding

Dan Lord reported that \$250 million was allocated to state park infrastructure, with \$200 million being allocated for local parks and trails. However, of the \$200 million, \$135 million was dedicated to three specific projects:

- \$60 million to the Detroit Joe Louis Greenway;
- \$55 million to the Grand Rapids Greenway project; and
- \$20 million to Copper Peak to rebuild the world's largest Olympic-style ski jump.

This leaves \$65 million for the statewide American Rescue Plan funding to local parks and trails via a competitive grant program that will be administered by the department's Grants Management Section.

The department did a soft announcement a couple of weeks ago. This new program is called the [Spark Grant program](#) and information has been posted on the web. Emphasis will be on parks, neighborhoods, community parks, and taking care of what already exists. Trail projects are also eligible. Grants Management will guide communities/applicants to the best funding source, to include the three other grant programs: Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, Recreation Passport, and Land and Water Conservation.

By the end of 2024, all of the \$65 million must be encumbered and contractors need to be on board. Projects must be completed by 2026.

They are also tuned into streamlining some of their internal processes, and possibly removing some prerequisites or things that could be barriers from a community perspective. This program will not have a match requirement.

The department is still building out this program, but the hope is to launch it late summer or early fall, with three funding cycles. This program is going to be different from the MNRTF process. It will be a little leaner and a little faster due to the 2026 completion deadline.

An advisory group will be established to assist in designing the application, scoring criteria, and building out the program. Dan will provide more updates at the August meeting.

d. Director's Update

Director Eichinger reported they are still in the negotiating process for the department's Fiscal Year 2023 budget. He is hopeful it will be completed by the end of the month.

The Director also commended the grants staff. In addition to running three complex and challenging grant programs, they are now going to manage this fourth grant program, in addition to assisting the Parks and Recreation Division with their \$250 million grant. He also welcomed the two new grant coordinators to the team.

He also reported it has been another challenging year with the state parks and getting them fully staffed, but he is hopeful they can continue to manage the parks in the same professional manner this season.

e. Update on MNRTF Staff Activities

Michael Chuff reported staff have wrapped up administrative completeness for the 2022 grant cycle, and grant coordinators will be conducting site visits over the next month.

VI. BOARD PACKET REFERENCE MATERIALS

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

VII. OTHER MATTERS AS PROPERLY BROUGHT BEFORE THE BOARD

Chair Cummings observed that the Board has not made a cost-of-living adjustment to the maximum development request amount in some time. He would like to have this discussion at the next Board meeting; starting with the last time development grants were set at \$300,000.

Director Eichinger is in agreement with having this discussion; however, he would also like to include a discussion about preserving a percentage specifically for small development grant projects.

Dan Lord listed the maximum allowances per program:

MNRTF = \$300,000 max;
Recreation Passport = \$150,000 max; and
Land and Water Conservation = \$500,000 max.

Director Eichinger also commented that the grant coordinators are concierges for the grant programs by steering grantees towards the most appropriate funding source.

VIII. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chair Cummings announced the next meeting of the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board is scheduled for August 17, 2022, beginning at 9:00 a.m., in the Alpena area. Details will be posted in advance of the meeting on the Board's [website](#).

IX. ADJOURNMENT

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

Chair Cummings then asked for a motion to adjourn.

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

The meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.m.



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



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

APPROVED: August 17, 2022