

**Upper Peninsula Habitat Workgroup
Meeting Minutes
May 10, 2022
Marquette Township Community Center – Marquette**

Attendees: In person voting members included: Dave Johnson (Upper Peninsula Sportsmen Alliance), George Lindquist (Michigan United Conservation Clubs), Sara Kelso (Marquette Conservation District), Dave Nyberg (Michigan DNR, NRC), Stacy Welling Haughey (Michigan DNR, Executive Division), Tom Seablom (Michigan DNR, Forest Resources Division), Jim Hammill (Safari Club International), and Bill Scullon (Michigan DNR, Wildlife Division). In person supporting members and staff included: Bob Doepker (Upper Peninsula Sportsmen Alliance), Clark Cedarburg (Lyme Great Lakes Timberlands), Scott Lakosky (Michigan DNR, Forest Resources Division), Stu Boren (Safari Club International Foundation), Kristi Dahlstrom (Michigan DNR, Executive Division), and Sarah Janda (Michigan DNR, assisting FRD&WLD). Virtual voting members included: Eric Stier (American Forest Management), Bernie Hubbard (Michigan Timbermen Association), Dave Anthony (Michigan DNR, NRC), Pam Nankervis (Ottawa National Forest), and Paul Thompson (Hiawatha National Forest). Virtual supporting members and staff included: Al Ettenhoffer, Ben Schram (Michigan Dept of Agriculture & Rural Development), Gary Willis (Michigan DNR, Forest Resources Division), Russ Mason, Hunter Peterson (Sustainable Resources Institute), and Jerry Jordan (Hiawatha National Forest)

Welcome/Introductions: Jim Hammill welcomed those attending both in person and virtually. Introductions included Scott Lakosky who introduced himself as the new EUP District Supervisor with the Forest Resources Division. Clark Cedarburg, a Forester with Lyme Great Lakes Timberlands, attended the meeting on behalf of Amy Oja. Attending virtually was Matt Ross, Director of Conservation with the National Deer Association, who received the invitation to attend from George Lindquist.

Review/Approval of Minutes: There was a motion by George Lindquist, supported by Dave Johnson, to accept the minutes as presented. Motion carried.

NRC/Lansing Staff Comments: Commissioner Dave Nyberg led the comments by thanking everyone for attending the meeting. Part of his role on the NRC is to support the UPHWG as it relates to the protection of game and sport fish. His term began October 2018 and ends in December of this year. Commissioner Nyberg turned it over to Commissioner Dave Anthony, a Yooper native of Ford River who was appointed to the NRC at the beginning of this year. He said he is looking forward to his service on the board and learning more about the work group. Commissioner Nyberg feels it'd be helpful to give a report on what the work group has accomplished and the workings of the group to spur others who may be interested in getting involved. The NRC will be hosting its October meeting in the UP which may be the ideal time to give a presentation.

CWD NRC Amendment Clarification: Stacy Welling Haughey shared clarification of the CWD baiting ban regulation. There was an amendment built in for a sunset on the baiting ban in the CWD surveillance area. Though it was never adopted and created confusion amongst hunters, the amendment is something that can be revisited with the commissioners and now would be the ideal time. Bill Scullon said we haven't had a positive test in the CWD surveillance area in the past couple years. Discussion ensued about whether the deer population is being tested to the degree of statistical confidence and whether hunters can be relied on for surveillance. Russ

Mason said he and another cohort are releasing a report that shares information regarding the expense of CWD sampling which can cost anywhere from \$29 - \$560 per sample depending on the state. He said the Agency should be doing everything it can to suppress CWD even if it's not present on the landscape. Despite the good discussion, it was agreed to bring the CWD task force back together. In the meantime, Stacy will provide the work group with background material regarding the vote to ban baiting in the CWD area and the sunset that was proposed and never passed.

Deer Wintering Complex Update: As a result of the two pilot projects, the Division identified nine deer wintering complex areas with a plan that involves a specific prescription for each. Currently, it's just a matter of waiting for the data and running it through the forest models. The next step will involve looking at the GEMS and developing a plan for that area. Jim said he and Stu talked about the results of the pilot project and though the templates help identify deficiencies in deer winter range, they lack explanation of the silviculture practices that need to be applied. Tom Seablom said Forest Resources Division is looking for a balance that is 50% shelter and 50% food.

Qualified Forest Program (QFP) Update: Ben Schram, Forester, joined today's meeting to discuss QFP and its administration under the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD). QFP provides property tax exemptions for landowners who actively manage their privately owned forests for commercial harvest, wildlife habitat enhancement, and overall improvement of non-forest resources. The benefits of the program include increase of wood to market, wildlife habitat sustainability, forest land resilience and forest health. Depending on property location, participation in the program can provide a savings of up to 40%. To be eligible, the property must be a minimum of 20 acres in size and 80% of that must be productive forest. For property greater than 40 acres in size, 50% of it must be considered productive forest. Structures are allowed but not eligible for exemption. In 2022, a total of 805,000 acres were enrolled into QFP. The sale of QFP parcels is allowed but it's encouraged buyers and sellers discuss the details prior to closing as buyers could be subject to a recapture tax of up to seven years if the property is removed from QFP. The program works in conjunction with conservation district foresters across the state to verify the property upon enrollment and serve as a local contact for landowners. Sara Kelso said she has been working with local realtors to educate them about the ins and outs of the program and it is her job as a consulting forester to follow up with landowners to make sure practices are being implemented so the program is not lost. Stu Boren said the DWC shapefiles and could be included in the criteria checklist. Ben Schram said the QFP checklist is governed by statute however it's just a matter of adding the shapefiles to this to their GIS database.

Regional State Forest Plan Update: Tom Seablom said they are working on the draft of the plan now with modeling refinement. The external engagement of the plan will be coming later in 2022. Public review will occur sometime in 2023. In 2008, there was a State Forest Management Plan with Regional Plans that accompanied it. The current goal is to get down to one State Forest Plan.

Large Grant Proposal: Jim Hammill provided an update on the most recent submission to the Michigan DNR Wildlife Habitat grant program. The proposal was for \$174,000 across eight land ownerships for a total of 241 acres. The grant objectives include a 100 acre mixed conifer tree

planting, replanting of existing tree species, and fencing and tree protection. Grant awards should be announced some time in May.

Landowner Visitation/Proposal for 2023-2024: Jim Hammill said there are 68 landowners across the UP that require a property site visit. Most landowners were solicited through the DNR deer camp survey while some have been through word of mouth. The goal is to identify looking for large landowner tracts in deer winter range.

Partnership Opportunities: Jim Hammill said he's been in contact with group who want to be involved in our process and a part of a large organization. He said it would be wise to partner with the Superior Watershed Partnership not just for their work force but because they also manage conservation easements.

Informational Brochure: Jim Hammill feels the work group messaging is weak. He said it's difficult to get our information out to people and there is a need to be on radio and tv. With respect to brochure development and information outreach, Jim showed some examples of glossy, colored brochures that would be ideal to reproduce. George Lindquist said he likes the idea of putting a brochure together and having it available.

Legislative Conservation Caucus Review: Jim reported that people were very engaged and seemed receptive to the information he presented. The group agreed it was a great form of outreach.

Next Meeting Date: The next meeting date of the UP Habitat Workgroup is Tuesday, August 9, 2022, at the Marquette Township Community Center.