

**Western Upper Peninsula Citizens' Advisory Council (WUPCAC)**  
**Meeting Minutes – APPROVED 3/18/25**  
**Wednesday, January 15, 2025**  
**5:00-7:30pm Central / 6:00-8:30pm Eastern**  
**Virtual via Zoom**

**Council Members Present**

Erik Bessonon	Suzanne Petschke	Dwaine Starr
Floyd Dropps	Horst Schmidt	Lucas Vold
Barb Gajewski	Jeff Sierpien	
George Lindquist	Tom Solka, <b>Chair</b>	

**Council Members Absent/Excused**

Dave Johnson	Skip Schulz	Warren Suchovsky
Dave Hall	Carol Mason Sherrill	Faye Williams
Chauncey Moran	Kelly Bennett Simon	

**Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Staff & Guests**

Kristi Dahlstrom, Executive Division, Marquette  
Stacy Haughey, UP Field Deputy-Executive Division, Marquette  
Darren Kramer, Fisheries Division, Escanaba  
Dave Lemmien, Wildlife Division, UP District  
Dr. Tyler Petroelje, Wildlife Division, Marquette  
Sgt. Marc Pomroy, Law Enforcement Division, District 1  
Doug Rich, Parks & Recreation Division, Baraga  
Tom Seablom, Forest Resources Division, Marquette  
Sean Sundholm, Finance & Operations Division, Marquette  
Ron Yesney, Parks & Recreation Division-UP Trails Section, Marquette

**Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance**

At 6:03pm Eastern/5:03pm Central, **Chair Solka** called the meeting to order and led the Pledge of Allegiance. He welcomed members of the public as well as DNR staff and fellow Council members.

**Introductions of Council Members/DNR Staff/Public Attendees**

At **Chair Solka's** request, **Ms. Dahlstrom** conducted a roll call of attendees from the Zoom participant list. A quorum of Council members was present. **Chair Solka** then provided a brief overview of the Council's advisory role as chartered by the DNR. **Ms. Haughey** reviewed virtual meeting etiquette and welcomed members of the public who registered to attend: Emma Woelkers from Senator Peter's office, Rich Rossway and Jodi Ouellette from Congressman Jack Bergman's office, Amber Butterfield from the Michigan Association of Conservation Districts, Patrick Thomson, Roger Blau, Jan VanAmberg, John Hawley, Chris Peterson, Gerry Christiaens, Craig Hughes, and Molly Powers.

**Adoption of Agenda**

**Chair Solka** asked the Council if there were any additions or revisions to the agenda. **Mr. Schmidt motioned to accept the agenda as presented; Mr. Lindquist supported the motion. After no discussion, Chair Solka called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.**

**Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes**

**Chair Solka** asked if there were any changes to the WUPCAC December 12, 2024 draft meeting minutes, which were distributed to the Council via email previously for review. **Mr. Lindquist motioned to approve the minutes**

**as submitted; Mr. Dropps supported the motion. After no discussion, Chair Solka called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.**

### **DNR Reports from Division Staff**

Written staff reports were provided to Council members on January 8, 2025. The following brief updates were added.

#### **1. *Stacy Haughey, UP Field Deputy***

- An update on a potential solar development on Ostego County (lower peninsula) was provided. Information on social media sites has not provided all the factual details. The DNR website will be providing a page with specifics. A 90-day public comment period is also being held prior to determining whether to move ahead in issuing a request for proposals for this development. Members of the public who have interest in commenting on this development can send comments to: [DNR-SolarProposal@michigan.gov](mailto:DNR-SolarProposal@michigan.gov).
- **Mr. Lindquist** asked if the 2022 WUPCAC resolution on solar development, which recommended to support only those solar developments that fit into current DNR protocol for site selection requirements on DNR lands, applies to this new site. **Ms. Haughey** confirmed it does.

#### **2. *Darren Kramer, Fisheries Division***

- A protected slot limit is part of a proposed change in walleye regulations on Lake Gogebic. A public meeting will be held on January 21 from 6-8pm central at the Marenisco Township Hall. Anyone unable to attend the in-person meeting is invited share their comments regarding this regulation proposal by completing this form: <https://forms.office.com/g/VrCXxJMD11>.
- **Mr. Dropps** asked if the powerpoint presentation from the meeting can be shared and if he could get a copy of the latest lake survey. **Mr. Kramer** will check with the Fisheries Division and report back. He later noted the last walleye population estimate on Lake Gogebic was in 2022 and will provide a copy to Mr. Dropps.

#### **3. *Tom Seablom, Forest Resources Division***

- No additional updates to the written report.

#### **4. *Sgt. Marc Pomroy, Law Enforcement Division***

- No additional updates to the written report.
- An update on law enforcement activity on snowmobile trails is included later on the agenda.

#### **5. *Doug Rich, Parks & Recreation Division***

- No additional updates to the written report.

#### **6. *Ron Yesney, UP Trails Section of the Parks & Recreation Division***

- No additional updates to the written report.
- An update on western UP trails is included later on the agenda.

#### **7. *Dave Lemmien, Wildlife Division***

- No additional updates to the written report. A detailed update on the deer harvest reporting system will be forthcoming on the agenda.
- **Mr. Sierpien** asked about the overlap between the continued UP deer management initiative (DMI) group and the CACs when it comes to deer regulation recommendations. **Ms. Haughey** explained the different layers of interaction and how information flows to the Natural Resources Commission (NRC). The DMI was created by the NRC in 2024 to help with deer regulation input. The UP members of the statewide DMI

group have been reconvened as the UP Deer Advisory Team (DAT) and meet with the Wildlife Division to discuss deer regulations. Members from the CACs serve on the UP DAT. The unique role of the CACs in providing input to the Director through formal resolutions was emphasized. Both groups have an important role in providing input on deer management. The CACs are also more broadly focused to include all natural resource topics.

- **Ms. Haughey** will be available after the meeting for additional questions if needed.

### **Public Comment on Agenda Items Only**

**Chair Solka** opened the floor for public comments on agenda items only; none were brought forth.

### **Annual Election of Officers**

**Chair Solka** noted the Bylaws require the Council to have a yearly officer election, which traditionally occurs at the beginning of the year. He turned the floor over to **Ms. Haughey** to conduct the election; **Ms. Haughey** opened the floor for nominations for 2025:

1. *Chair:* **Mr. Starr** nominated Mr. Solka; **Mr. Solka** consented to the nomination. After three opportunities for nominations to be made, no additional nominations were brought forth. **Mr. Schmidt motioned to close the nominations; Mr. Lindquist supported the motion. After no discussion, Ms. Haughey called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.**
2. *Vice Chair:* **Ms. Gajewski** nominated Mr. Lindquist; **Mr. Lindquist** consented to the nomination. After three opportunities for nominations to be made, no additional nominations were brought forth. **Mr. Schmidt motioned to close the nominations; Ms. Gajewski supported the motion. After no discussion, Ms. Haughey called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.**
3. *Vote:* **Ms. Haughey** announced **Mr. Solka** has been nominated for Chair and **Mr. Lindquist** has been nominated for Vice Chair. **Mr. Schmidt motioned to accept these two individuals for Chair and Vice Chair; Mr. Bessonen supported the motion. After no discussion, Ms. Haughey asked for an online poll vote to be initiated. Since Mr. Starr and Mr. Vold were attending the virtual meeting via phone, their votes were accepted verbally. The motion passed unanimously.**

*Final Results:* **For 2025, Mr. Solka and Mr. Lindquist will serve as Chair and Vice Chair, respectively.** **Chair Solka** humbly thanked Council members for their confidence in him, stating he pledges to continue running meetings in a businesslike fashion and creating opportunities for everyone to be heard. He also noted that **Mr. Lindquist** has been a faithful and consistent member since the Council originated in 2008 and will serve the Council well in the Vice Chair role.

### **Old Business**

1. **Council Member Selection Update (Ms. Haughey)**
  - The CAC Selection Team is meeting January 24.
  - The Selection Team is made up of half public members and half DNR staff.
  - New WUPCAC & EUPCAC members from applications received will be selected to fill all current openings.
  - A vetting process follows, then all applicants will be notified.
  - Orientation and the first meeting for new members will be in March (WUPCAC) & April (EUPCAC).
  - A unanimous vote at the December 2024 meeting allowed an increase in membership by one, as an exclusive one-time occurrence, to accommodate valued member, Dr. Kirk Schott, to finish out his term when and if he is able to return after experiencing a recent health event. A change in the bylaws will not be needed until that time arises.

## 2. Follow-Up from December Meeting

### ▪ *Deer Harvest Comparison (Dave Lemmien)*

- **Mr. Lemmien** clarified deer harvest number presented at the December Council meeting included DMAP/crop damage permit harvest numbers. The figures presented in this update do not include them.
- Deer harvest data was presented, showing a 17% increase in early archery harvest over last year (2023), but an 11% decrease from 2022. The firearm season saw an 18% increase over last year (2023), but a 13% decrease from 2022.
- The discussion covered the 2024 late archery season being impacted by a 75% reduction in available doe permits in DMUs 351 and 352, as well as a significant reduction in the overall season length for antlerless take in the mid-tier of the UP (decisions both made by the NRC). Despite the reduced season length and lower number of available permits, the late archery season saw a 21% increase over last year (2023), but a 14% decrease from 2022.
- **Mr. Lindquist** questioned the late archery season regulations. **Mr. Lemmien** and **Sgt. Pomroy** clarified antlerless hunting with archery equipment on the single deer license and deer combo license in late archery was prohibited after December 10 for the mid-tier UP DMUs. Antlered hunting with archery equipment continued through January 1 in these units.
- The overall contribution of the late archery harvest to the total seasons' harvest remained steady at 2% for 2022, 2023, and 2024 each. The antlerless harvest contribution to the overall late archery harvest total was 77% in 2022, 76% in 2023, and 73% in 2024, indicating more hunters are harvesting does than bucks in the late archery season. A trend of hunters targeting does at the end of firearm season, through late archery and into muzzleloader season was suggested.
- The contribution of muzzleloader season to the total deer season's combined harvest numbers is low at 6-7% and includes 50% of the harvested does. However, the 2024 muzzleloader season itself showed the largest gain with an increase of 52% over 2023, and a 16% increase over 2022.
- Of all four 2024 hunting seasons, there was a 19% increase in harvest from 2023, but still 11% below 2022 levels.
- Additional details shared included the northern lower peninsula (zone 2) seeing an 8% increase in overall harvest while the southern lower peninsula (zone 1) experienced a 3% decrease. The potential impact of EHD and agricultural practice may have impacted harvest numbers. Muzzleloader season showed significant gains in participation across all 3 zones, particularly in the northern LP (zone 2), which was up 155% from last year. The significant increase may be attributed to a regulatory change allowing hunters to use any firearm in 2024.
- **Mr. Dropps** inquired about the number of hunters in the UP. **Mr. Lemmien** indicated he will follow-up with Mr. Stewart for more detailed information and report back.
- The UP's hunting license sales remained stable, while statewide, there was a slight 1-1.5% increase. **Ms. Haughey** mentioned the number of licenses sold can be tracked, but not where hunters are hunting. **Mr. Dropps** suggested adding a question about hunting location on the license application to improve tracking this information.
- The 2024 deer harvest was consistent with historical trends, with about 25% of hunters successfully harvesting deer. **Ms. Gajewski** suggested comparing the proportion of success versus the increase in license sales.
- **Mr. Lindquist** encouraged more hunter participation in the UP deer camp survey to get detailed success rate data by DMU. **Mr. Lemmien** plans to present the UP deer camp survey results at a future meeting.

- **Rockland Pond Stocking for Youth Fishing (Stacy Haughey/Darren Kramer)**
  - In response to a request by **Mr. Schulz** at the December meeting on the status of stocking the Rockland Pond in Ontonagon for youth fishing, it was noted that locating the historical information on the pond’s status has proven challenging with the recent change in fisheries staff from the area.
  - Research will continue with a more detailed update planned for the next meeting.
- **Waterfowl Digest Release Dates (Stacy Haughey)**
  - In response to a request by **Ms. Gajewski** at the December meeting for a timeline of the release dates for the 2024 waterfowl digest, an overview of the delayed release dates was presented on screen and explained.
  - The delays with the availability of all digests last fall were addressed and the DNR has acknowledged the frustration by sportsmen and women across the state. The DNR has promised more timely publication in the future.
  - **Mr. Starr** raised a concern about the lack of hard copies of the 2025 Spring Turkey Digest at license vendor locations, noting he and his friends/family rely on a hard copy to verify areas for permit applications. **Ms. Haughey** confirmed the availability of an electronic copy on the DNR website and will email the Council a link for the online digest (link was emailed mid-meeting). She will also follow-up on the status of printed copies.

## **New Business**

### **1. Brief Moose Survey Update (Dr. Petroelje)**

- A moose population study in the UP is underway. The project aims to investigate factors limiting moose population growth in the core range (western UP), which has remained between 400 and 500 moose for the last decade. The core range is expected to hold twice that number. It is hoped the study will reveal why there is a stagnation in the population, from the 10% annual growth seen in the early 2000s to virtually no growth over the last 10 years.
- Plans for captures in late February include collaring 20 moose: 10 adult cows, 5 adult bulls, and 5 calves. This will allow a good understanding of survival across different age classes. An additional 40 animals will be collared next year.
- Partners in the study include the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community, Michigan DNR and Northern Michigan University.
- A formal press release is expected in early February to inform the public about the capture event.
- **Mr. Lindquist** thanked **Dr. Petroelje** for his work on the project, noting a CAC resolution recommending a research project in 2023.

### **2. Western UP Snowmobile Trail Update (Mr. Yesney)**

- Snowfall has been regional, with some areas of the UP having good snowfall while others have very little. In those areas with good snowfall, increased snowmobile activity has greatly benefitted local businesses who suffered economic losses last season due to a lack of snow.
- The Miners Castle trail remains closed due to a lack of agreement with the road commission, which has led to confusion and complaints from snowmobilers who weren’t aware and ended up in wrong turns, on timber sales, and in other unpleasant situations. The trail is marked as closed.
- A reroute in Twin Lakes due to the failure of the Misery River bridge and decking utilizes part of old Trail 13 which works its way back to Twin Lakes. Some riders won’t take the reroute and utilize the highway bridge which is not acceptable.
- A rerouted trail in southwest Ontonagon is seen as a positive development, despite the use of a good portion of Norwich Road being challenging for both snowmobilers and motorists. The DNR reached an agreement with the county road commission to allow use of the road for the next year.

- Noise complaints from snowmobilers modifying their exhaust systems to make their machines louder are also a concern that trails staff and law enforcement are dealing with.
- Three snowmobile speed-related fatalities have occurred so far this year. Efforts continue to be made to educate riders about the Ride Right campaign. The Ride Right campaign includes social media posts, advertising in gas stations, and posters above gas pumps to educate snowmobilers about the consequences of speeding. The tagline for the campaign is “Riding Home Safe to Family and Friends”, emphasizing the importance of slowing down and safe riding.
- The efforts of snowmobile clubs in grooming trails were commended. The volunteers, time spent all hours of the day and miles covered are remarkable. The DNR is fortunate to have these volunteers.
- **Chair Solka** asked for a reminder about the road commission’s objection to the Miner’s Castle trail. **Mr. Yesney** explained the road commission objects to the continuation of using a 0.8 segment of H-58 to cross the Miner’s River. This segment of trail has been successfully in existence for nearly 30 years. Alternate re-routes of the trail in this area was explored thoroughly but found not possible due to complex private land ownership. **Ms. Haughey** added multiple presentations have been made to the county board and the road commission with no success in reopening the trail.

3. Snowmobile Season Overview/Noise Control (Sgt. Pomroy)

- The challenges of enforcing speed limits on snowmobile trails and the increase in patrols to address speed-related fatalities were discussed. The three fatalities to date occurred in a small area of the western UP where heavy snowmobile traffic was concentrated due to the amount of rideable snowfall in that area. High visibility and targeted patrols were increased the last two weekends as a result.
- The lack of a numerical speed limit on most snowmobile trails, with the exception of a few areas that have specific laws like Marquette, make speed enforcement difficult. An influx of law enforcement helps and officers from low snowfall areas have joined patrols in high snowfall areas. Local sheriff departments also have good snowmobile enforcement programs.
- Noise control is a continuous issue, with efforts to enforce sound laws and address loud exhaust systems used by snowmobilers. High visibility, targeted and advertised patrols have occurred, with an emphasis on reaching out-of-state riders. Not all trail can systems fail noise control enforcement tests, creating a challenging enforcement issue.
- **Mr. Schmidt** asked if the three fatalities mentioned earlier are age-related. **Sgt. Pomroy** clarified the fatalities are random and involve all age groups. The high volume of snowmobile activity in areas with good snowfall contributes to increased traffic and associated risks. Efforts to spread out snowmobile activity and reduce congestion are ongoing.

4. Winter Boating Access Site Partnership (Ms. Haughey)

- A continued partnership to improve ice fishing access sites, with over 25 hot spot sites consistently maintained, was highlighted. Ice anglers utilize trailers with ORVs or snowmobiles to navigate on frozen lakes during the winter and a plowed lot allows for adequate and safe parking.
- The partnership involves multiple DNR divisions, including parks and fisheries, local governments and road commissions, fishing groups and resort owners. The partners have been crucial in maintaining these sites and are extremely appreciated by the ice angling community. Wisconsin and Minnesota utilize a similar partnership system. Anyone wishing to become a partner can contact **Ms. Haughey** or **Mr. Rich**.
- There is no funding source tied to keeping access sites plowed during the winter months. Boating access sites are funded by the Michigan State Waterways Fund, a restricted fund derived primarily from boat registration fees and a portion of Michigan’s gas tax that supports the construction, motorized operation and maintenance of public recreational boating facilities. Frozen use is not an allowable expense under that funding model.
- A press release of access sites will be issued soon once all agreements are signed.

- **Mr. Schmidt** asked about ice safety and if anglers can use boats in open water in the winter if ice conditions are lacking. **Ms. Haughey** stated it is the angler’s responsibility to always be aware of ice conditions. Just because an access site may be plowed, doesn’t mean the ice is safe to use. And if conditions warrant, anglers can use boats.

5. Committee Interest (Ms. Haughey & Chair Solka)

- The Council reviewed committee structures, including fisheries, forestry, trails/recreation/law, and wildlife.
- The importance of participation was emphasized, and Council members were encouraged to join any of the committees at any time based on interests. New members will be informed at the time they are appointed.
- Committee leaders were thanked for their time and efforts, ensuring a purposeful committee process.

**Committee Activity**

1. Fisheries (Mr. Dropps)

- Plans are in place to invite DNR fisheries staff to discuss the DNR’s proposed walleye regulations for Lake Gogebic at the next fisheries committee meeting.

2. Wildlife (Mr. Lindquist)

- Several proposals regarding deer management were discussed at the committee level and two were agreed upon to bring to the Council for consideration.
- **Resolution #1: Recommend a 1-Buck Rule for the Entire UP**
  - This resolution replicates the July 2024 resolution and includes additional information and a critical point: *“tying a rule change (1 buck rule-APR) to what a percentage of hunters/ stakeholders feel is not proper wildlife management, and these changes should be based on science and numbers”*. The need for science-based management was emphasized. It was supported by a majority of the wildlife committee members (4-2).
  - The DNR’s response to the July 2024 resolution was previously reviewed at the December Council meeting as well as at the recent wildlife committee meeting, with the members noting the DNR’s considerable time and thought put into the response. However, based on the response, the committee felt the initial resolution should be refined and presented for resubmission.
  - **Chair Solka called for a motion. Mr. Starr motioned to approve the resolution as submitted; Mr. Sierpien supported the motion. Chair Solka called for discussion.**
  - Discussion was lengthy and ensued on points of the resolution, including **Mr. Dropps** questioning the financial impact on license sales if a 1-buck rule was implemented. **Mr. Lemmien** explained the majority of licenses sold are for combination tags, which if not available, could significantly affect the wildlife division’s revenue. However, it was noted this resolution is for the UP only and not statewide.
  - **Mr. Starr** clarified the DNR’s response to the July 2024 resolution indicated the following: “The Department would be open to pursuing this regulation based on UP hunter’s desires, though current license structure and statutory language may have to be amended to consider this change. Much of this decision might fall to overall U.P. sportsmen preferences.” **Mr. Starr** criticized the DNR’s reliance on hunter preference surveys, resulting in the refined resolution on the table that includes the decision be made using science-based management only. He also argued that deer management should focus on resource management rather than financial implications.
  - **Ms. Haughey** clarified, for public attendees, the Natural Resources Commission is the body who has exclusive authority to set and/or change deer (game) regulations. The DNR provides recommendations to the NRC, but the DNR does not make those decisions.

- **Chair Solka** questioned the effectiveness of submitting the same resolution to the DNR, seeking clarification on the expected outcomes. He expressed concern about the potential reception of the resolution by the DNR being sent again, and the implications of not considering hunter opinions.
  - **Mr. Lemmien** noted the scientific data cited in the proposed resolution of 700 deer harvested with the second buck tag in 2023 shows minimal impact on the entire deer population. Scientifically, winter severity has a major impact on the deer population, versus an additional 700 deer on the landscape. He predicts a similar response to this refined resolution by the DNR that was received from the July resolution. In addition, public input is a part of the DNR’s due process for all game species with a hunting season.
  - **Mr. Sierpien** highlighted the decline in deer hunting in the UP and the need to improve deer population conditions, suggesting the 1-buck rule would enhance hunting opportunities. He disagrees with the notion a 1-buck rule wouldn’t have an impact, citing scientific evidence available elsewhere indicating otherwise.
  - **Mr. Dropps** expressed the need for the Council to be open-minded and consider the varied expectations of hunters these days.
  - **Chair Solka** again questioned the implications of not considering public opinion on DNR issues, citing it being one of the reasons the CACs came into existence.
  - **Being no further discussion, Chair Solka called for vote via online poll.** During the voting, **Chair Solka** and Council members became aware of a sudden lack of quorum. After further review, it was discovered member participation on the virtual meeting dropped several minutes prior to the online poll vote.
  - **Chair Solka** apologized for the confusion, and after referring to the bylaw voting rules, he declared the Council was unable to take any further action on this resolution due to a lack of a quorum and tabled it for the next meeting. He thanked everyone for their thoughtful comments and time spent on this issue.
  - **Chair Solka** added he feels the bylaws may need to provide clarification as it pertains to quorums, virtual meetings, and resolution voting requirements and will plan to convene a small group to review them prior to the next meeting.
- **Resolution #2: Recommend Changes to the Deer Harvest Reporting App**
    - This resolution, supported by a majority of the wildlife committee (6-1), recommends four changes to better navigate the DNR’s deer harvest reporting app. The importance of accurate deer harvest reporting and the need for updates to the current system was emphasized.
    - After another verification of member participation on the virtual meeting, **Chair Solka** declared the Council was unable to take any further action on this resolution due to a lack of a quorum and tabled it for the next meeting.
3. Trails/Recreation/Law (Ms. Gajewski)
- The committee is planning a meeting before the March Council meeting.
  - The committee lead is gathering information on an implement for snowmobile trail groomers that allows the rolling of trails for better trail maintenance. This has been a recurring suggestion brought up by **Mr. Schulz**.
4. Forestry (Mr. Vold)
- No report.

### **Next Meeting**

1. Next WUPCAC Meeting

- **Chair Solka** noted the next Council meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 18 in person, beginning at 6:00pm Eastern/5:00pm Central in Baraga (location to be determined).

2. Topic Suggestions for Next Meeting

- **Chair Solka** asked Council members to forward any suggestions for upcoming agendas to him, Ms. Haughey or Ms. Dahlstrom.
- **Mr. Lindquist** suggested an update from the UP Deer Advisory Team (DAT) would be appealing to the Council.

**Public Comments (On Any Topic)**

**Chair Solka** opened the floor for public comments on any topic; none were brought forth.

**Closing Comments from the Council**

**Chair Solka** open the floor for closing comments from the Council; none were brought forth.

**Adjournment**

**Chair Solka** thanked everyone for attending the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 8:35pm Eastern/7:35pm Central.