

# Western Upper Peninsula Citizens' Advisory Council (WUPCAC)

## Meeting Minutes – APPROVED 5/1/25

Tuesday, March 18, 2025

5:00-7:30pm Central / 6:00-8:30pm Eastern

Baraga Lakeside Inn Conference Room, Baraga

### Council Members Present

Erik Bessonon  
Brian Driscoll  
Floyd Dropps  
Barb Gajewski  
Dave Hall

Dave Johnson  
George Lindquist, **Vice Chair**  
Gordon Maclean  
Chris Peterson  
Suzanne Petschke

Carol Mason Sherrill  
Warren Suchovsky  
Ryan Tanner  
Lucas Vold

### Council Members Absent/Excused

Chauncey Moran  
Horst Schmidt

Skip Schulz  
Kelly Bennett Simon

Tom Solka, **Chair**  
Faye Williams

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

Dave Caroffino, Fisheries Division, Charlevoix  
Kristi Dahlstrom, Executive Division, Marquette  
Colton Flak, Wildlife Division, Baraga  
Stacy Haughey, UP Field Deputy-Executive Division, Marquette  
Morgan Lucot, Wildlife Division, Baraga  
Kris Nault, Fisheries Division, Baraga  
Cory Kovacs, Fisheries Division, Escanaba  
Doug Rich, Parks & Recreation Division, Baraga  
Bill Scullon, Wildlife Division, Norway  
Tom Seablom, Forest Resources Division, Marquette  
CO Cody Smith, Law Enforcement Division, District 1  
Sean Sundholm, Finance & Operations Division, Marquette

### Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance

At 6:01pm Eastern/5:01pm Central, **Vice Chair Lindquist** called the meeting to order and led the Pledge of Allegiance. **Chair Solka** was not able to attend due to a previous state board meeting commitment. **Vice Chair Lindquist** welcomed members of the public as well as DNR staff and fellow Council members. **Ms. Dahlstrom** confirmed a quorum for the purpose of conducting Council business.

### Introductions of New Members

**Vice Chair Lindquist** and the Council welcomed four new members: **Brian Driscoll** (Delta County), **Gordon Maclean** (Houghton County), **Chris Peterson** (Menominee County) and **Ryan Tanner** (Houghton County). They introduced themselves and provided a brief background of their interests. The Council is now fully seated at 20 members.

**Ms. Haughey** also acknowledged and thanked two previous members for their service: Dwaine Starr (Menominee County) and Jeff Sierpien (Delta County).

### Introductions of All Meeting Attendees

All public attendees, DNR staff and council members introduced themselves at the request of **Vice Chair Lindquist**. **Ms. Haughey** welcomed members of the public who were in also in attendance: Michael McMahon of the Keweenaw ATV Club, and Del and Evan Platzke. She also welcomed two new DNR staff additions to the Baraga Office, Morgan Lucot, wildlife biologist, and Colton Flak, wildlife technician.

### **Adoption of Agenda**

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

### **Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes**

**Vice Chair Lindquist** asked if there were any changes to the WUPCAC January 15, 2025 draft meeting minutes, which were distributed to the Council via email previously for review. **Mr. Bessonen motioned to approve the minutes as submitted; Mr. Johnson supported the motion. After no discussion, Vice Chair Lindquist called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.**

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

Written staff reports were provided to Council members on March 11, 2025. The following brief updates were added. **Vice Chair Lindquist** noted there is a wealth of information in the division reports; extra copies were available in the back of the room to share.

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

- A little known fact was shared. The Department of Natural Resources receives less than 1% (0.5%) of the entire state of Michigan's general fund budget.

#### **2. Cory Kovacs, Fisheries Division**

- No additional updates to the written report.
- **Vice Chair Lindquist** asked about the status of splake in Munising Bay. **Mr. Kovacs** explained the ongoing marking study and the continuation of the current prescription and stocking.

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

- An update for fire operations was shared. The deployment of fire officers to Texas is now at 10. Prescribed fires in the lower peninsula have also started. There is currently no snow on the ground in the Menominee area and in the lower peninsula.

#### **4. CO Cody Smith, Law Enforcement Division**

- **CO Smith** is attending on behalf of Lt. Ryan Aho. There were no additional updates to the written report.
- **Vice Chair Lindquist** inquired about the need for guiding licenses for ice fishing on Lake Superior as the sport seems to be growing. **CO Smith** noted charter licenses cover those individuals in a boat and does not address frozen surfaces. **Mr. Caroffino** explained a current loophole in legislation—which needs to be rectified—which does not address guiding on frozen surfaces. He encouraged council members to contact their legislators if they desire. The Fisheries Division is aware of the loophole; however, a change would require legislation.
- **Ms. Gajewski** asked if only Michigan residents can provide guide services on Iron and Gogebic County lakes. **Mr. Dropps** noted he is aware of several Wisconsin guides who bring folks to fish in Iron County lakes. He added legislation was thrown out a few years ago that addressed this issue. It currently is not illegal for nonresidents to guide on Michigan's inland lakes.
- **Ms. Haughey** suggested this topic as a future agenda item.

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

- Parks and Recreation Division Chief Ron Olson and Assistant Chief Jackie Blodgett will both be retiring on April 30. Chief Olson has 20 years with the division and is 76 years old. An extensive search will be conducted, and Chief Olson will stay on long enough to job shadow.
- **Vice Chair Lindquist** mentioned Chief Olson was honored at the recent MUCC convention for his service.

## 6. **Bill Scullon, Wildlife Division**

- An update on the moose capture project, including the operation, ongoing monitoring, and collaboration with KBIC and MSU was provided. The highest source of mortality seems to be vehicle collisions at this time. He noted the helicopter service utilized on the collaring project was a contracted service and they were very efficient.
- The 16<sup>th</sup> year of the Deer Habitat Improvement Partnership Initiative (DHIPI) grant program received 48 applications before the deadline on March 14. There is only \$100,000 in grant funding to award.
- **Mr. Bessonon** asked when the first update of the wolf camera survey will be provided. **Mr. Scullon** stated staff continue to analyze millions of pictures. He will ask Dr. Petroelje when an update might be available.
- **Mr. Hall** asked if there is an update on white-nose syndrome. **Mr. Scullon** indicated John DePue is the expert on the topic and noted ongoing research and collaboration with universities and federal agencies. **Ms. Mason Sherrill** stated she understood that bats weren't dying from the fungus itself, but rather from using depleted energy levels when woken in winter. **Ms. Haughey** noted a presentation on this topic is planned for a future meeting once winter bat surveys are completed.
- **Ms. Mason Sherrill** asked about the recent sightings of two cougar cubs. **Mr. Scullon** confirmed the sighting of the two cubs, approximately 7-9 weeks old in Ontonagon County. This is the first sign of reproduction in Michigan in over 100 years. Due to media interest, they are trying to protect the cubs from the public, despite having not seen them since the first sighting.
- **Vice Chair Lindquist** asked how many of the 10 cow moose collared were pregnant. **Mr. Scullon** stated the results of the blood tests are not yet known.

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

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

## **Old Business**

### 1. Follow-Up from January Meeting

- **COMPLETED: Share Lake Gogebic powerpoint presentation & lake survey (Dropps):** This was forwarded to **Mr. Dropps** by **Mr. Kramer** shortly after the last meeting.
- **UPDATE: Rockland Pond Stocking for Youth Fishing (Schulz):** In response to a request by Mr. Schulz on the status of stocking the Rockland Pond in Ontonagon for youth fishing, the following update from Mr. Nault, fisheries biologist, was shared:
  - Rockland Pond was stocked in 2013, 2017, and 2019 by transplanting wild fish from Steusser Lake in Ontonagon County. The MDNR likely quit transferring fish to Rockland Pond from Steusser Lake because of the time and cost involved in the process. Wild fish that are transferred from waterbodies must get tested to make sure that they are disease free, so a sample of fish from Steusser Lake needed to be tested before fish could be transferred to Rockland Pond.
  - The stocking prescription for Rockland Pond has been written to allow wild bluegill, pumpkinseed sunfish, and largemouth bass to be transferred to the pond. We plan on sampling bluegill and pumpkinseed from Alberta Pond this spring and will get the fish tested for diseases. If the fish come back disease free, we plan on transferring some bluegill and pumpkinseed into Rockland Pond this summer before the kid's fishing derby.
  - **Mr. Kovacs** added that **Mr. Nault** spoke to the representative for the Rockland Pond fishing derby, which is held in mid-June, to ask if they could push it to mid-July so that the DNR can test fish from area lakes, but the group opted out of stocking this year because it's cooler to have the event in June.
- **UPDATE: Number of Hunters in UP for 2024 Season (Dropps):** In response to a request by **Mr. Dropps** at the January meeting for the number of UP hunters for the 2024 season, **Mr. Lemmien** provided the following written response: in 2024, a total of 41,498 people living in the UP purchased a deer hunting

license. **Mr. Dropps** asked if this number is up or down; **Mr. Scullon** said it is a decline, but the rate of decrease has slowed.

- UPDATE: *Date of Printed Turkey Digests at Offices/License Vendor Locations (Starr)*: **Ms. Haughey** indicated hard copies of spring turkey digests were due in stores on February 19. Hard copies of the fall turkey digests are due in stores on July 1.
- UPDATE: *UP Deer Advisory Team (DAT) Activities (Lindquist)*: **Ms. Haughey** shared the following written update on screen from Chad Stewart on the UP DAT's latest activities:
  - The DNR will be bringing forward recommendations for deer season changes at the April NRC meeting. Staff have been meeting regularly with the UP and LP DAT teams throughout the year.
  - The DAT has developed 4 recommendations to present to the DNR thus far.
    - 1) The first is to reinstate the antlered hunting option for the Liberty and Independence hunts. This change was made last year and is expected to be effective this year, allowing youth hunters and hunters with disabilities during these seasons to only take antlerless deer. The Department supports this recommendation and will be including it in our WCO as a recommended change for this coming year.
    - 2) The second recommendation is to pursue wolf management when the time comes that they are delisted federally.
    - 3) The third recommendation is to reinstate the coyote hunting season throughout the year. This topic will be discussed at the NRC meeting in March.
    - 4) The fourth recommendation is to reinstate the opportunity for archers to take antlerless deer throughout the UP. This vote passed by a narrow margin (8-6 with one abstention). UPSA is strongly opposed to this change. The Department is currently considering whether to include this in the order or not.

## **New Business**

### **1. Resolution Considerations from Wildlife Committee (Vice Chair Lindquist)**

- Two proposals regarding deer management that were brought for Council consideration at the January meeting were not voted upon due to a sudden lack of quorum and were tabled for action at this meeting.
- Resolution #1: Recommend a 1-Buck Rule for the Entire UP
  - **Vice Chair Lindquist** provided a brief recap on the background of this resolution, referring members to the January meeting minutes for previous discussion on the matter.
  - **Vice Chair Lindquist called for a motion. Mr. Tanner motioned to approve the resolution as submitted; Mr. Hall supported the motion. Vice Chair Lindquist called for discussion.**
  - Discussion revolved around implications of the one-buck rule resolution, with some members expressing concerns about its legislative nature, noting it would not be in the DNR's authority, but rather it would require a legislative change.
  - **After no further discussion, Vice Chair Lindquist called for a vote. The motion failed (2 support, 11 oppose, 1 abstention).**
- Resolution #2: Recommend Changes to the Deer Harvest Reporting App
  - **Vice Chair Lindquist** indicated this resolution recommends four changes to better navigate the DNR's deer harvest reporting app.
  - **Vice Chair Lindquist called for a motion. Mr. Bessonon motioned to approve the resolution as submitted; Mr. Peterson supported the motion. Vice Chair Lindquist called for discussion.**
  - Discussion revolved around the need for a simple method to search and/or download county harvest information and make the app more intuitive and user-friendly.

- **After no further discussion, Vice Chair Lindquist called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.**

2. Proposed Revisions to WUPCAC Bylaws (Vice Chair Lindquist)

- A small group of Council members were brought together by Chair Solka to make some changes to the bylaws after the January meeting, specifically as it pertains to online meetings, quorums, voting and resolutions.
- Revisions to the bylaws recommended by this group were presented to the Council in a handout with changes highlighted. Recommendations are for information only at this meeting, with a vote of approval taking place at the May meeting. Any further revisions or questions before the May meeting can be forwarded to Chair Solka.
- **Mr. Dropps** asked for clarification on where resolutions are sent once approved, as some pertain to feedback on regulations that only the NRC can act on. **Ms. Haughey** explained it is procedure, since the Council is an advisory body to the DNR, that all approved Council resolutions are submitted to the DNR Director. Time-sensitive Council resolutions that pertain to an item being considered for action by the NRC may be shared by DNR staff as information only.
- **Mr. Suchovsky** asked about legislation the Council may want to weigh in on. **Ms. Haughey** stated the Councils are advisory to the DNR. Members can weigh in on an individual basis or through their respective sportsman's groups.
- **Mr. Maclean** suggested, from his previous board experience, changing the wording under quorum to "majority of those present" rather than "half plus one" to prevent any confusing situations. **Ms. Dahlstrom** will relay this suggestion to **Chair Solka** for a possible revision prior to the May meeting.

3. Conversations & Coffee Fisheries Regulation Proposals (Mr. Kovacs)

- **Mr. Kovacs** presented several proposed regulation changes, such as removing trout management (Type A regulation) from Section 13 Lake and changing South Kidney Lake's regulation to allow more liberal harvest Type D to Type A). The rationale behind the proposed changes, including the need to adapt to changing water conditions and improve angler opportunities, was explained.
- Proposed regulations for various lakes, including Winslow, Stanley, Hagerman, and Lake Mary (all in Iron County) were also discussed. The list of lakes has been reduced based on public feedback, focusing on lakes deemed important. The proposal includes a protective slot limit (PSL) for walleye, with a minimum size limit of 15 inches, 18-23-inch PSL (no harvest), and a daily possession limit of 3 with only 1 over 23 inches. The concept of protected slot limits and their potential benefits for resilient fish populations was explained.
- The availability of the UP Fisheries Division team for public comments was emphasized. The Northern Lake Michigan management unit, covering areas in the western UP such as the Menominee River drainage and the Ford River East, was noted. Jen Johnson and John Baumann were identified as key contacts for specific areas within the unit and their phone numbers and email were shared. Contact information for fisheries biologists in the Lake Superior Management unit were shared as well.
- The management of Cedar Lake (Marquette County) was noted, including its historical stocking and current status as a Type B fishery. The decision to remove splake management (Type B regulation) from Cedar Lake was explained due to unsuitable habitat conditions and difficult access.
- An update on Strawberry Lake (Marquette County) was provided. This lake is a trophy brook trout fishery with fluctuating water levels. The lake has been managed as a Type D fishery, but recent fluctuations have hindered growth and survival. A proposal to liberalize regulations and promote youth fishing was discussed, including the installation of a fishing pier. The management plan aims to increase accessibility and interest in the fishery, moving it to a Type A regulation.
- The results of a creel survey on Lake Gogebic, showing strong support for the protective slot limit (minimum size limit of 15 inches with an 18-23-inch PSL (no harvest), with a limit of five walleye (with only 1

fish 23 inches or greater) was explained. The survey included interviews with anglers to gauge their opinions on the proposed regulations. Several members of the Council voiced concerns about the statistical significance of the survey sample size, emphasizing the need for broader public input. **Mr. Kovacs** acknowledged the importance of public feedback and the need for compliance with proposed regulations to ensure their success.

- The unique fisheries of Big Reef and Standard Rock were discussed, noting increased pressure and the need for proactive measures. Charter data and anecdotal feedback indicate declines in size structure, prompting the proposal to limit daily possession to two lake trout (currently five) with no change in the minimum size limits. The regulation aims to protect unique lake trout populations and prevent overfishing. Ongoing research into hooking mortality and the potential for deep-water releases to reduce mortality will continue.
- The proposal to limit burbot daily possession to five fish (currently unlimited) was introduced, recognizing their native status and high spawning site fidelity. The proposal is based on the need to protect burbot populations from high harvest and aligns with other Great Lakes species limits. The decision to remove burbot hoop netting permits was explained and is due to inconsistent use and the potential impact on spawning populations. The proposal aims to balance cultural traditions with conservation efforts, ensuring sustainable harvest practices.
- The evaluation metrics for the proposed walleye regulations, including annual recruitment surveys and population estimates was explained. The focus is on monitoring changes in recruitment and size structure to assess the effectiveness of the regulations. The long-term monitoring plan includes regular surveys and assessments to track the impact of the regulations on fish populations.
- The Council provided feedback on the proposed regulation changes, with some members expressing support and others raising concerns.
- **Ms. Gajewski** inquired about alternative management options for lake trout regulations, including the possibility of closing the fishery completely. **Mr. Kovacs** explained the decision to limit daily possession to two fish as a compromise, balancing conservation and angler interests. The proposal aims to maintain unique fisheries while providing opportunities for anglers to harvest fish. The importance of being proactive in management to protect fish populations was highlighted, recognizing the challenges of collecting comprehensive data.
- **Mr. Dropps** reviewed a resolution from the UP Sportsman's Alliance, questioning the inclusion of certain lakes in the proposed regulations. The resolution suggests focusing on lakes with good natural reproduction and removing those with intermittent success.
- **Ms. Gajewski** emphasizes the need for more comprehensive data to support the proposed regulations, suggesting the inclusion of additional lakes for better evaluation.
- **Mr. Kovacs** stressed the importance of ongoing communication and collaboration between the DNR Fisheries Division and local stakeholders and noted plans for future meetings to discuss the proposed regulations further. Once meeting details are confirmed, they will be shared with the Council.
- The Council thanked **Mr. Kovacs**, **Mr. Nault**, and **Mr. Caroffino** for the in-depth information provided and seeking the Council's input.

### **Committee Activity**

#### **1. Trails/Recreation/Law (Ms. Gajewski)**

- The committee met on February 11. No resolutions were prepared.
- Meeting discussion centered around meeting frequency, snowmobile club reimbursement for roller use, and clarification on helmets needed when riding on ice.
- Several ice fishing sleeper shacks are being seen in Iron County. A good amount of garbage is being left behind and parking can be an issue in lots. This may warrant a future discussion on how to handle this fairly new recreational activity in the UP. **Mr. Suchovsky** noted rules for overnight camping along rivers, etc. may be a resource.

2. Fisheries (Mr. Dropps)

- The committee met on March 6 for 2.5 hours. **Mr. Kovacs** and **Mr. Kramer** from the Fisheries Division and two NRC commissioners attended the meeting. A resolution was discussed but could not be prepared in time for the Council meeting.
- **Mr. Dropps** stated credit is owed to **Mr. Kovacs** for participating in the committee’s meeting for the entire time and providing great information. He appreciated it very much. **Mr. Kovacs** stated the membership, and the public are the kind of relationships valued by the Fisheries Division. He will follow-up with the information the committee requested.

3. Forestry (Mr. Vold)

- No report. Any suggestions on topics for the committee to discuss are welcome.

4. Wildlife (Vice Chair Lindquist)

- The committee did not meet.
- **Vice Chair Lindquist** indicated any Council member can join a committee or two and can let Ms. Dahlstrom know. **Mr. Dropps** noted that most committee meetings are by zoom and can be arranged through Ms. Dahlstrom. **Mr. Peterson** expressed interest in joining the Trails Committee.

**Next Meeting**

1. Next WUPCAC Meeting

- **Vice Chair Lindquist** noted the next Council meeting will be held on Thursday, May 1, in person, beginning at 6:00pm Eastern/5:00pm Central in Menominee County (location to be determined).

2. Topic Suggestions for May Meeting

- Topic suggestions for future meetings to date include use of drone technology in the DNR, deer camp survey results, deer season opening date history, and a white nose syndrome update.
- Future topic suggestions made from this meeting include wolf camera survey update, arctic grayling update and a discussion on guiding process on the Great Lakes and inland lakes.
- Any other topic suggestions can be sent to the Chair, Vice Chair, or Ms. Dahlstrom.

**Public Comments (On Any Topic)**

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

**Closing Comments from the Council**

**Vice Chair Lindquist** open the floor for closing comments from the Council.

1. **Vice Chair Lindquist** thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and is hopeful the deer fair well from this winter.
2. **Mr. Suchovsky** mentioned several items including farmers losing crops from bears and allowing more bear hunting permits, allowing night hunting for deer on private property/farming areas overrun by deer for management purposes, an interest in knowing the number of live deer versus number of deer killed, loss of trilliums and arbutus, cedar regeneration/lack of hardwood regeneration, the economic value of cedar, and the need for better management of natural resources to capture economic potential and generate wealth for society.

**Adjournment**

**Vice Chair Lindquist** thanked everyone for attending the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 8:51pm Eastern/7:51pm Central.