



Western Upper Peninsula Citizen Advisory Council DNR Division Reports

Date of Production: January 2024 (Information current as of 1/17/2024)

This document is provided by Michigan DNR staff as a supplement for Western UPCAC Council members. Please email or call with any questions.

Meetings/Events/Press Releases

Upcoming DNR Public Meetings

For virtual or conference call meeting information, please go to the DNR website at: [DNR Meetings](#) and click on the appropriate meeting and/or agenda for instructions.

January 24	Western UP Citizens' Advisory Council, 6pm, Virtual, 906-226-1331
February 8	Natural Resources Commission, Lansing (nrc@michigan.gov)
February 13	Accessibility Advisory Council, 9am, 517-284-5958
February 14	Natural Resources Trust Fund Board, 9am, 517-284-5954
February 14	Off-Road Vehicle Advisory Workgroup, 1pm, 517-331-6219
February 16	Timber and Forest Products Advisory Council, 8:30am, 517-582-3220
February 20	Eastern UP Citizens' Advisory Council, 6pm, Newberry, 906-226-1331
February 21	State Parks Advisory Committee, 2pm, 517-284-6135
February 22	Waterways Commission, 9am, 517-285-0747
February 29	Snowmobile Advisory Workgroup, 9am, 517-331-6219

U.P. State Park & State Sponsored Activities

Please check with the state park before attending activity for any scheduling changes. For all activities: [DNR Things to Do Calendar](#)

January 27	Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park – Guided Snowshoe Hike & Lantern-Lit Trail
February 3	Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park – Guided Snowshoe Hike & Lantern-Lit Trail
February 3	Tahquamenon Falls State Park – Guided Snowshoe Hike & Lantern-Lit Snowshoeing/Skiing
February 9-11	Ralph A. MacMullan Conference Center – Cross-Country Skiing & Snowshoe Getaway
February 9-11	Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park – Midwest Telefest 2024
February 10	Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park – Guided Snowshoe Hike & Lantern-Lit Trail
February 10	Tahquamenon Falls State Park – Guided Snowshoe Hike & Lantern-Lit Snowshoeing/Skiing
February 17	Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park – Guided Snowshoe Hike & Lantern-Lit Trail
February 17	Tahquamenon Falls State Park – Guided Snowshoe Hike & Lantern-Lit Snowshoeing/Skiing
February 24	Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park – Guided Snowshoe Hike & Lantern-Lit Trail
February 24	Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park – Porkies Winter Carnival – 2024 Snowburst
February 24	Tahquamenon Falls State Park – Guided Snowshoe Hike & Lantern-Lit Snowshoeing/Skiing

Recent DNR Press Releases

For full details, go to: [DNR Press Room](#)

- DNR News: Nature learning, winter pruning, state land review, new 'Wardens' (1/18/24)
- DNR launches deer initiative to tackle contemporary challenges (1/17/24)
- Weather conditions close Chippewa County snowmobile trail (1/17/24)
- DNR urges snowmobile, ice safety amid winter storm this holiday weekend (1/12/24)
- Successful fall fish stocking means more angler opportunity (1/12/24)
- Showcasing the DNR: Add more outdoors in 2024 (1/11/24)

- DNR fisheries biologist retires after nearly 40 years of service (1/11/24)
- #MiStateParks: track chairs, cold play, campground hosts & more (1/11/24)
- DNR releases new Ride Right snowmobile safety video (1/9/24)
- Ready to ride? Snow is coming (fingers crossed!) (1/9/24)
- NotMISpecies webinar: Engaging ORVers to stop invasive spread (1/9/24)
- Winter hunting and trapping opportunities (1/9/24)
- Natural Resources Commission to meet Thursday in Lansing (1/9/24)
- Regulation amendment for select steelhead rivers takes effect this spring (1/8/24)
- DNR Events/Get Involved: Volunteering, ice fishing classes, winter fun (1/4/24)
- Artists sought for Porkies Artist-in-Residence Program (1/3/24)

Grant Contacts

For grant information, to go: [DNR Grants](#)

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|---|---|
| ▪ Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Grant | Merrie Carlock, 517-284-5931, carlockm@michigan.gov |
| ▪ Recreation Passport Grant | Merrie Carlock, 517-284-5931, carlockm@michigan.gov |
| ▪ Michigan Spark Grants (Public Recreation) | Merrie Carlock, 517-284-5931, carlockm@michigan.gov |
| ▪ Aquatic Habitat Grant | Chip Kosloski, 517-284-5965, kosloskic3@michigan.gov |
| ▪ Fisheries Habitat Grant Program | Chip Kosloski, 517-284-5965, kosloskic3@michigan.gov |
| ▪ Michigan Invasive Species Grant | Erin Campbell, 269-300-9698, campbelle6@michigan.gov |
| ▪ Wildlife Habitat Grant | Clay Buchanan, 517-614-0918, buchanenc1@michigan.gov |
| ▪ U.P. Deer Habitat Improvement Partnership Grant | Bill Scullon, 906-563-9247, scullonh@michigan.gov |
| ▪ Forestry Grants | https://www.michigan.gov/dnr/buy-and-apply/grants/forestry |
| ▪ Land & Water Conservation Fund | Christie Bayus, 517-242-8737, bayusc@michigan.gov |
| ▪ Waterways Program Grants | Linnea Dawson, 517-290-2200, dawsonl@michigan.gov |

January NRC Meeting Summary – Ed Golder, Public Information Officer

The Natural Resources Commission met today on the campus of Lansing Community College in Lansing. DNR Director Scott Bowen approved:

- A land use order that closes the Port Huron State Game Area to target shooting with firearms. Port Huron SGA is a narrow strip of state land that follows the Black River and provides hunting opportunities along a unique wildlife habitat corridor in southeast Michigan. Despite efforts to manage target shooting at the state game area, shooters often ignore area rules and cause damage to neighboring houses and generate other human safety issues.
- Changes to Fisheries Order 243.24, which remove the regulatory provision related to commercial wholesale reporting within the order to reflect recent changes to state statute. The department will create a new order, Fisheries Order 255.24, to describe reporting requirements for state-licensed commercial fishers and state-licensed wholesale fish dealers.
- Three land transactions. Details can be found in the NRC agenda.

Committee of the Whole

Mark Monroe of the Forest Resources Division gave an update on the department's annual forest roads inventory. The inventory is completed each year to comply with Act 288 of 2016, which requires the DNR to post maps of state forest roads and mileage open to motorized use each year, and requires us to inventory forest roads by region. Based on this review, the department is recommending to the director for action next month that:

- 38.7 miles of road segments be removed from state forest maps for conventional and ORV use
- 36 miles of roads be deleted due to data cleanup of non-existing or duplicate roads
- 254.9 miles of roads be added to maps that were not previously included in the inventory, almost all of them open to ORV use
- Language in the land use order be revised so that Boating Access Sites open or closed to ORV use are regulated by what is identified on the forest roads map

Seth Herbst of Fisheries told the commission about proposed changes to Fisheries Order 255.24 that will be before the director for action next month. The changes would bring regulations into compliance with state law, implementing new catch reporting requirements that were part of the renegotiated Great Lakes Consent Decree. In addition, the proposed changes to FO 255.24 would reflect compliance with new catch reporting requirements under state law for inland sportfishing guides.

Chad Stewart from Wildlife gave a presentation on preliminary results from the 2023 Elk Season. The department estimates that we currently have 1,277 elk in Michigan, greater than the Elk Management Plan's population goal of 500-900 animals. Over the past 10 years, a total of 1,716 elk have been harvested by state-drawn hunters and tribal hunters. In 2023 during Hunt Period 1 – which occurs on select days in August, September and October – state hunters harvested 71 elk, including 30 bulls and 41 cows/calves. Tribal hunters harvested three elk during Hunt Period 1. During Hunt Period 2, which occurs on select days in December, state hunters harvested 97 elk, including 41 bulls and 56 cows/calves. Tribal hunters harvested four elk during Hunt Period 2, although those results are still being tabulated.

Chad also updated the commission on the Deer Management Initiative, a new effort to address emerging challenges in deer management in Michigan. These challenges include fewer hunters, increased suburban and urban sprawl, changes to habitat, changing weather patterns, predators and disease. The initiative will convene two work groups, one in the Upper Peninsula and one in the Lower Peninsula. Chad said we are close to getting out a press release to invite participation from non-affiliated individuals to be on each work group. Chad also talked about efforts to include tribal governments in the process.

Commission Chair Tom Baird introduced new NRC Commissioner Robin Clark of Sault Ste. Marie, who was appointed to the body in December by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer.

How to Participate in the NRC Meetings

- If you're unable to attend the meeting but wish to submit written comments on agenda items, please write to: Natural Resources Commission, P.O. Box 30028, Lansing, MI 48909 or email: nrc@michigan.gov.
- If you would like further information or would like to address the Commission, please email: nrc@michigan.gov. Persons registering on or before the Friday preceding the meeting will be allowed up to five (5) minutes for their presentation. Persons registering after the Friday preceding the meeting or at the meeting will be allowed up to three (3) minutes. Persons with disabilities needing accommodations should contact the NRC Assistant.
- Look for the agendas and other Natural Resources Commission items at the Natural Resources Commission webpage (www.michigan.gov/NRC).

Eastern UPCAC Update

The **Eastern UP Citizens' Advisory Council** held a virtual meeting on Thursday, December 20th. Division reports were reviewed, and several questions were asked by the Council on various items in the reports. Stacy Haughey, John Pepin and Dave Lemmien covered a segment on deer season feedback. Old business included the wolf management update standing item and a review of the DNR's response to a Joint UPCAC resolution on cormorant funding and control. New business items included an overview of the Commercial Forest Program by Jason Caron, 2023 Highlights and Accomplishments of the Eastern UP Parks & Recreation Division by Eric Cowing, and an Eastern UP Trails overview by PJ Costa. Under committee activity the wildlife committee proposed to support the WUPCAC's resolution on implementing a moose hunt. The resolution passed by majority. The council later approved their 2024 meeting dates and locations. The next EUPCAC meeting will be on February 20 in Newberry.

More information on both the Western and Eastern CACs can be found at www.michigan.gov/upcac.

Executive Division: Stacy Haughey, UP Field Deputy

Jan. 17, 2024 Contact: [Chad Stewart](#), 517-282-4810

DNR launches Deer Management Initiative to tackle contemporary challenges

Interested in participating? Apply by Jan. 31

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources, in collaboration with the Michigan Natural Resources Commission, is initiating a comprehensive Deer Management Initiative aimed at evaluating and responding to present-day deer management challenges. The initiative seeks to develop recommendations to address these challenges and ensure the sustainable and healthy management of deer populations and their habitats across the state.



In the Lower Peninsula, the DNR faces significant hurdles in managing deer populations due to declining hunter numbers and how that affects traditional management. Continued changes in land-use patterns – with a high percentage of privately owned land, which can limit access to hunting lands – further exacerbate these challenges. Additionally, bovine tuberculosis and chronic wasting disease are established and affecting deer populations in some areas of the region.

In the Upper Peninsula, habitat concerns, changing weather patterns and a diverse array of predators present different challenges from those in the Lower Peninsula. These combinations of factors have not been experienced in deer management in recent years.

A comprehensive and inclusive approach is critical. The DNR will actively engage with stakeholders from various natural resources organizations as well as tribal partners to develop recommendations that acknowledge these challenges and work toward improved deer management in the state. The DNR is also seeking to involve unaffiliated individuals who share concerns about deer management to encourage a far-reaching, representative discussion.

"The Deer Management Initiative process is poised to guide recommendations and lay a framework for future deer management changes. We are looking forward to working with our traditional stakeholder organizations and partners, while also welcoming creative, new voices. It's important that none of us are tethered to a single idea, that we are all willing to explore novel and diverse solutions to enhance our deer herd and effectively address the challenges ahead," said DNR deer management specialist Chad Stewart.

"We'll be developing two separate groups, one for each peninsula, since the challenges in each area are unique," Stewart said. "Our focus with each group will be to pull together people with different perspectives and experiences but a common passion for improving Michigan's deer herd for future generations."

Those interested in participating in this vital initiative are invited to submit their applications at the link below. The application period will remain open through Jan. 31, and successful applicants will be notified shortly thereafter.

[Apply for DMI ►](#)

To submit your thoughts on topics that the groups should consider, or ideas for improvement, please email DNR-Wildlife@Michigan.gov, including the term "DMI" in the subject line.

Facilities and Operations Division: Jason Peterson, WUP Administrative Area Manager **(Working Out of Class)**

- Dan Lord has accepted and been named the new Chief of Finance & Operations Division (FOD). Dan replaces Erik Eklund who has moved to a new position within the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).
- Area managers have been working diligently to produce a facility census that enables us to track what spaces we have or don't have available in our Customer Service Centers (CSC) and Field Offices. This has allowed us to follow more accurately who is occupying spaces.

- 2023 was another busy firearm deer season; staff have done a great job working with customers getting them familiarized with harvest reporting and using the DNR app.
- Along with daily operations, many of our western Upper Peninsula (WUP) staff have been engaged on committees looking at future customer service needs and upcoming FOD inservice and training opportunities.
- Funding for a large HVAC renovation at the Marquette Customer Service Center has been approved. This project will be replacing the original system that has been in place since the early 1970's and is scheduled to begin in March 2024 with an anticipated completion date of October 2024.

Fisheries Division: Darren Kramer, Northern Lake Michigan Management Unit

Management Unit Update

- Staff attended the Michigan Coastal Management Program Coastal Leadership Academy sponsored by the Central Upper Peninsula Planning and Development Regional Commission, APA MI, EGLE, and NOAA in Escanaba in early December. This workshop introduced local decision makers (e.g., county emergency managers, municipal planning and developing staff, etc.) to scenario-based planning and zoning tools and adaptation strategies that can help address Great Lakes coastal challenges in their jurisdictions. The workshop introduced resources and resilient principles that can be incorporated into community planning documents to build resilience in coastal municipalities and regions. Many great local contacts were made.
- Technician staff continue to enter data from 2023 field surveys in their respective databases while fish structure aging and equipment repairs are ongoing.
- In 2021, Fisheries Division received a Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grant to remove a dam on the Ontonagon River estuary. Grant money was left over, and West Lake Superior Unit staff constructed a reptile/amphibian hibernaculum at the site. In October 2023, this project was finished with both the hibernaculum and ADA pathway. The project connects the adjacent residential area to the river front. This was a no-cost project for the Village of Ontonagon and the Village council is happy to have a new recreation area for their citizens along with a new kayak-friendly estuary.

Fish Production Section Update

- Maintenance staff at Thompson State Fish Hatchery are working to replace tank floor valves in the nursery rearing area. Doing this work in-house is going to save a sizable chunk of capital outlay funding. Fish culture staff are assisting in this effort.
- Maintenance staff at Marquette State Fish Hatchery (MSFH) have been working with Troy Zorn-Marquette Fisheries Research Station, to design and build fish barriers that can go into Hunt creek in support of the Arctic Grayling research project he is hoping to initiate.
- The third and final lot of future broodstock was transferred from Oden State Fish Hatchery's isolation facility to MSFH. This represents a significant milestone in the initiative. Kudos to the Oden team for doing an outstanding job with the first phase of rearing of all three brood lots.
- Surplus Arctic Grayling broodstock fish were stocked in three inland Lakes in November. Houghton County's Penegor Lake received 300 fish; West Johns Lake in Luce County received 400 fish and Pine Lake in Manistee County was stocked with 1,105 Grayling brood. This is another major milestone as anglers can now target Arctic Grayling for catch and immediate release.

Research Section Update

- There has been quite a bit of activity around the Arctic Grayling initiative of late. Staff from the Marquette Fisheries Research Station (MFRS) and Tribal Coordination Unit met with tribal partners associated with the Arctic Grayling initiative. The primary intent of the meeting was to discuss proposed work in a series of experimental stream sections at Hunt Creek. The research is intended to look at controlled introductions of Arctic Grayling with low-, medium-, and high densities of brook trout.
- Field work has been completed for 2023 and the Lake Char has been winterized and put in for winter storage.
- Staff spent a few days reorganizing our cold storage to accommodate new Tribal Coordination Unit staff in MFRS.
- Staff are fully engaged in winter work include fish age estimation, equipment maintenance, data analysis/report writing, etc.

Parks & Recreation Division-UP Trails: Ron Yesney, UP Trails Coordinator

Trail Specialist: Jeff Kakuk, Western Upper Peninsula

Snowmobile Trails

- Iron County: UP15 has been reopened between Trail UP2 and Trail UP111. Iron Range Snowmobile Club and the Ottawa National Forest have worked to approve and develop a new route that is now open.
- Houghton County: UP13 trail loop north of Twin Lakes will remain closed due to loss of a large trail bridge.
- Ontonagon County: UP12 will be able to reopen between Norwich Road and NF-630 after a bridge engineering inspection was completed. The bridge over the Cranberry River will be useable by snowmobile traffic only for 2024 season. Trail Sponsor North Country will seek engineering and design opportunities.
- There have been very little forestry impacts to the snowmobile system this season.

Multi-Use Trails

- Trail infrastructure failure continues to occur and impact many of the trail systems within the WUP. This trend should be expected due to age and condition of the system.
- Houghton County: The Bill Nicholls Rail Trail design work is completed between Painsdale and South Range. The department is reviewing funding options for the 2 miles of trail that has potential to further impact both trail connectivity and the Adams Township Water Supply. A FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant was resubmitted by DNR for the 2024 grant cycle to aid in the large infrastructure construction costs.
- Four large culverts on rail grades in the WUP trail system have been funded for construction and awarded to Ruotsala Contracting. These sites have been completed and a 5th site was able to receive emergency work to avoid a spring grade failure.



Trail Specialist: Rob Katona, Central Upper Peninsula

Project Names	Description	Trail Use	Anticipated Completion	Q1 Updates
ORV Route Grading in Alger, Delta, Marquette, Menominee, and Dickinson Counties	Multiple projects for grading and smoothing ORV routes with multiple grades planned in high use areas to help prevent rough routes	Rail Trails & ORV Routes	Summer/Fall 2024	Working on scopes, requested funding to enter in PR database for approval. Projects will be advertised this spring.

Snowmobile Trail 2 Dickinson County Bridges/Culverts	Replace two bridges with large bottomless culverts or new bridges depending on EGLE permit		Fall 2024	Working on scope and EGLE permitting.
Nahma Grade Multi-use Trail	Design and construction 3.7-mile multi-use Rail Trail in Delta County work includes clearing, surfacing and culvert/bridge installation	Rail Trails	Summer/Fall 2024	Large arch box culverts have been installed with the final restoration work to occur in spring. Trail surfacing (pit run/gravel) will be the final phase of the project which should be completed this season pending funding.
Clowry Grade Bridge #6	Design and rehab/construction of multiple bridges on this designated ORV/snowmobile multi-use Rail Trail in Marquette County	Rail Trails	November 2023	Design for bridge #6 is at 50%. Will need additional funding for construction.
Clowry Grade Bridges #1, #4, #5 & #7	Design and rehab/construction of multiple bridges on this designated ORV/snowmobile multi-use Rail-Trail in Marquette County	Rail Trails	TBD	Currently in holding phase for moving into MDOT engineering/design.
Clowry ORV Improvements	Continue filling low areas and culvert replacement on the Clowry Grade ORV C & CL Routes	Rail Trails	Fall 2024	Working on work scope, requested funding to enter in PR database for approval. Project will be advertised this spring.
Little Presque Isle Rec Area Improvements	Trail repairs, parking improvements and boardwalk/bridge repairs throughout 42 sites at LPI recreation area and Wetmore Pond	Non-Motorized & Mountain Bike	October 2024	Design is complete, construction will begin this spring.
Days River Single Track Trail Construction	Approximately 10 miles of single-track trail construction designed for mountain bike use	Non-Motorized & Mountain Bike	2025	Engineering/design nearly complete, working on EGLE permitting and environmental. Tentative letting for bids in early summer.
Tyoga Pathway Bridges	Replace one bridge and replace or rehab second bridge both spanning the Laughing Whitefish River	Non-Motorized	TBD	Currently in a holding phase for moving into MDOT engineering/design.
LPI Songbird Trail and Harlow Creek Bridges	Replace two popular pedestrian bridges on the LPI songbird trail and pathway to cabin #6 and north trail system	Non-Motorized	TBD	Currently in a holding phase for moving into MDOT engineering/design.
Genes Pond Pathway	Construction of 1.75-mile accessible pathway with scenic overlooks adjacent to state forest campground located near Ralph in Dickinson County	Non-Motorized	2025	Engineering/design nearly complete, looking at letting for bids late spring or early summer.
Laughing Whitefish Falls Bridge	New pedestrian bridge construction on NCT over Laughing Whitefish River at the Laughing Whitefish Falls Natural Area	Non-Motorized	TBD	Currently in a holding phase for moving into MDOT engineering/design.
Marquette County ORV Routes Improvements	Repair large holes replace culverts and surfacing on multiple ORV routes in western Marquette County	ORV	Summer/Fall 2024	Working on scope, requested funding to enter in PR database for approval. Projects will be advertised this spring.
Forest Islands Trailhead Improvements	Using remaining funds from open contract to improve two trailheads on this trail system. Work includes expanding parking, filling low areas,	ORV	Summer 2024	Design complete, waiting on pricing from contractor bulletin.

	constructing a picnic area with tables and grills, and creating accessible walkways to new picnic area and facilities.			
Felch Grade Surface Improvements III	Gravel capping on the Felch Grade in Menominee and Delta Counties	ORV	Summer/Fall 2024	Working on scope and PR submitted for summer minor construction project.
Gwinn-Arnold Improvements and Restoration IV	ORV G route Marquette County filling, gravel, and culvert work	ORV	Summer/Fall 2024	Working on scopes, requested funding to enter in PR database for approval. Project will be advertised this spring.
Delta-Menominee ORV Routes Improvements	Minor bridge railing and decking repairs replace culverts and surfacing work	ORV	September 2024	Working on work scope, requested funding to enter in PR database for approval. Project will be advertised this spring.
Central UP ORV Route Dust Control	Perform dust control at multiple sites on ORV routes to prevent dust caused by ORV traffic in residential areas and other areas meeting criteria	ORV	June 2024	Working on additional treatment sites and executing the contract for early summer treatments.
<u>PROPOSAL</u> : Hiawatha NF ORV Routes	Nearly 100 miles of ORV routes proposed to be designated that would provide connectivity and looped riding across Marquette, Delta, Alger and Schoolcraft Counties	ORV	TBD	USFS provided mixed use analysis, however, it was incomplete. Waiting for follow-up information.
<u>PROPOSAL</u> : Ishpeming-Negaunee-Sands ORV Routes Proposal	ORV routes that would provide connectivity to several communities and looped riding opportunities in central Marquette County. Proposals are pending securing land permissions and trail easements.	ORV	TBD	Most of the proposed routes are located on Cliffs NR property. Our trail easement specialist is currently working on a trail easement acquisition offer to be reviewed by Real Estate.
<u>PROPOSAL</u> : Negaunee ORV Extension	Extend ORV route in Negaunee along IOHT to provide legal RR crossing and access to roads/routes open to ORVs to the east. Work will include new trail construction and large culvert installation. Snowmobile trail will be relocated off of non-motorized IOHT to new trail segment.	ORV & Snowmobile	2025	Received approved RR crossing permit, held pre-app meeting with EGLE, received IOHT board support for trail proposal and construction. Working on long-term lease or land purchase for private parcel where majority of construction will occur. Entering trail proposal into database.
<u>PROPOSAL</u> : Westwood Pathway	Designate and improve non-motorized pathway located on State owned property adjacent to Ishpeming DNR FO and Westwood High School	Non-Motorized Pathway	Summer 2024	Proposal has been entered, going through review.
<u>PROPOSAL</u> : Eagle Mills-Gwinn-Little Lake ORV Route	ORV Designate existing snowmobile trails that are already heavily used by ORVs. Designation will allow funding for maintenance and provide direction for community connectivity	ORV	Summer 2024	Finalizing a couple of reroutes and landowner permissions that was not anticipated due to land ownership exchange. Trail proposal will be entered after completing final items.

<u>PROPOSAL</u> : Little Lake – Chatham RR Grade ORV Route	ORV Designate segments of existing RR grade and county roads to provide ORV connectivity between Chatham and Little Lake and beyond	ORV	Proposal submitted Summer/Fall 2024	Remaining title analysis for determining ownership across several remaining gaps has been completed by our property analyst. Waiting on AG review and opinion of findings.
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Law Enforcement Division (LED): Lt. Ryan Aho, District 1 Law Supervisor– Western UP

- **COs Phil Helminen and Jared Ferguson** located an illegal ORV trail on public lands that went around a berm. The COs located the owner of the ORV hunting in a ground blind, and he was using a crossbow during the late archery season when crossbows are not permitted. The COs discovered the hunter had several bait piles of corn that exceeded the two-gallon limit. When asked about the violations, the hunter stated he was not aware of the equipment rules and how much bait was allowed. Enforcement action was taken.
- **CO Alex VanWagner** checked a lake in Iron County for ice fishing activity. The CO approached an angler with three tip-ups out and the subject immediately stated he did not have a fishing license. A citation was issued for the violation.
- **CO Alex VanWagner and Sgt. Brian Bacon** checked Iron County lakes for weekend ice fishing activity. While driving up to one of the launches, the COs observed one male subject out on the ice with a tip-up in the water. The subject was checked and admitted he did not have a fishing license. A citation was issued for the violation.
- **CO Alex VanWagner** and a Michigan State Police trooper responded to a structure fire in Caspian. Upon arrival, there was a camper trailer fully engulfed in flames. CO VanWagner and the trooper investigated the scene as it appeared to be an arson. Footprints from multiple subjects were observed in the snow among other items left as the subjects fled the scene according to the complainant. Search warrants were obtained, and interviews were conducted after leads related to the incident developed. The incident was turned over to the MSP.
- **CO Brian Lasanen** assisted the Keweenaw County Sheriff's Office with a rollover property damage accident with entrapment. Once on scene, the driver and passenger were alert, talking, and uninjured. After cutting the seatbelts, they were both able to crawl out the back hatch of the vehicle.
- In Menominee County, **CO Steve Sajtar** responded to assist local law enforcement with a domestic assault in progress. According to Menominee Central Dispatch, the suspect was attempting to run over his girlfriend with a truck after striking her vehicle several times. Menominee Central Dispatch advised that the suspect had fled the scene driving a lifted pickup truck while highly intoxicated. CO Sajtar intercepted the suspect vehicle fleeing the scene. The suspect attempted to evade CO Sajtar by making several abrupt turns and eventually turning into a local grocery store parking lot. CO Sajtar activated his emergency lights and stopped the suspect before he could enter the grocery store. When asked about the domestic assault, the suspect denied having any sort of argument with anyone. CO Sajtar could smell a strong odor of intoxicants coming from the suspect. CO Sajtar asked the suspect how much alcohol he consumed that day. The suspect stated, "I've had about eight beers". After gaining consent to search the suspect's vehicle, CO Sajtar located two open containers containing intoxicants. CO Sajtar ran the suspect through Standardized Field Sobriety Tests (SFSTs) and administered a Preliminary Breath Test (PBT). CO Sajtar arrested the suspect for operating a motor vehicle while intoxicated and possession of open intoxicants in a motor vehicle. A report was submitted to the prosecutor seeking charges for felonious assault.
- **COs John Kamps and Jackson Kelly** were on patrol when they came across a freshly dumped doe carcass. The carcass was freshly processed and dumped in the middle of a gravel pit. The COs followed the tracks from the dump site to a local camp. The COs were unable to contact anyone at the camp, so they went to the owner's residence. At the residence, the COs observed an ORV with matching tire tread from the dump site and blood on the tailgate. After a brief interview with the suspect, the COs received a full confession for taking the doe with a rifle out of season and outside of one of the Deer Management Units that allow doe hunting. Additionally, the COs determined that the suspect had shot a 6-point and a 7-point prior in the deer season. Both combo tags were unvalidated and still in the suspect's wallet. Evidence was seized from the individual and a citation was issued for the multiple violations.
- **CO Brian Lasanen** was called to assist the Houghton County Sheriff's Office with a vehicle that left the roadway, went through a garage, and landed on the ice at Rice Lake. Once on scene, it was determined that the vehicle was

barely on the ice and just the front tires where in the water. The vehicle was pulled from the lake, vehicle pieces cleared from the lake, and the driver walked away from the accident with no injuries.

- In Menominee County, **CO Steve Sajtar** assisted with recovering an injured hunter from his elevated deer blind. The injured hunter called 911 after dislocating his hip in the elevated blind. First responders were unsuccessful in locating the hunter's camp as it did not have a physical address. CO Sajtar was first on scene after using a series of trails to navigate to the camp. After locating the injured hunter, CO Sajtar assisted EMS with lowering the hunter to the ground and transporting him to the ambulance. The hunter was taken to the hospital and treated for his injuries.
- **CO Steve Sajtar** conducted a commercial processor inspection at a local meat processing facility in Menominee County. While completing the inspection, CO Sajtar overheard a call from Menominee Central Dispatch of an unresponsive male subject experiencing a seizure. The male subject was in the grocery store adjacent to the meat processing facility. CO Sajtar ran to the adjacent building and administered first aid. After a few minutes, the unresponsive subject became responsive. CO Sajtar kept the subject conscious and responsive until EMS arrived. The subject was taken to the hospital by EMS and treated for his injuries.
- **CO Steve Sajtar** partnered with Wisconsin Conservation Warden Gavin Brault to speak at the Marinette – Menominee Great Lakes Sport Fishing (MMGLSF) meeting. At the MMGLSF meeting, the COs presented the latest fishing regulations for both Michigan and Wisconsin waters. Both COs answered questions about current regulations in their respective states. In addition, CO Sajtar and Warden Brault explained boundary water regulations that pertain to the boundary waters between Michigan and Wisconsin.
- **COs Jeremy Sergey and Jackson Kelly** had obtained information that an individual illegally trapped a fisher and a marten and failed to register them back in the 2022 season. The COs interviewed the individual and obtained a full confession that the fisher and the marten were trapped outside of the season, without a license, and were never registered as required by law. The COs seized the mounted fisher and the mounted marten. During the interview, the COs also discovered three more traps set on the individual's property and determined the individual failed to obtain a license for the 2023 season as well. A citation was issued for trapping without a license for the traps set in 2023 and a report is being submitted for the fisher and the marten that were harvested the year prior.


Forest Resources Division: Tom Seablom, Western UP District Supervisor

- Field work for the 2026 year of entry (YOE) inventory season started in October. The next western UP (WUP) Open House will be for the Baraga unit on May 16th. Open House and Compartment Review schedules for the 2026 YOE are posted online under the public input section along with other state forest inventory information at: Michigan.Gov/Forestinput.
- As of January 16th, 309 timber sale contracts are open WUP-wide. This represents 990,362 cords of timber on 53,606 acres, valued at approximately \$36.5 million. Included in this are 28 Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) sales representing 114,886 cords of timber on 5,968 acres, valued at approximately \$3.5 million. As January 16th, 14 sales are available WUP-wide for the minimum advertised price. This represents 34,818 cords of timber. Find more information on state forest timber sales at: Michigan.Gov/Timber.
- WUP units are reporting 41 active timber sales totaling about 5,352 acres. Units report increased interest in hardwood sawtimber. Mixed reports on pulpwood sales with Baraga reporting low interest and Escanaba seeing increasing interest. Escanaba also seeing strong demand for cedar.
- Units have been focusing on getting a head start on the 2024 fiscal year (FY) timber harvest plan with about 48,026 acres planned for treatment statewide; of that, 12,010 acres are in the WUP. In addition, units have been working on road and bridge improvement projects. The Crystal Falls unit reports that the Black Creek Bridge near Loretto has been replaced and road is open as of January 6th.
- Although wildfire activity is low with the winter snows, the fire protection staff is as busy as ever with equipment maintenance, training, and the purchase of new fire equipment.


- Starting January 1st, open enrollment for the Commercial Forest Program continues until April 1st. For more information on the Commercial Forest Program, go to Michigan.Gov/Commercialforest.
- Welcome to our newest DNR Forest Division employees!
 - Shane Kolinski** has started as a Fire Officer at the Crystal Falls field office. He is originally from the Flint area. He attended Western Colorado University received a master's degree in environmental management. He previously worked for the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Division as a wildlife technician. He also worked for the Michigan DNR on a stewardship crew.
 - Corey Gonyea** started as a Fire Officer at the Escanaba Field Office. He is from Manistique. Corey worked as an equipment operator in Colorado where he was involved in wildland fire there. After that, he worked two seasons with the US Forest Service on the Mt. Baker Snoqualmie Initial Attack crew in Washington state. Corey moved home to be close to family and he couldn't be happier to land this job with the Michigan DNR!
 - Matt Rian** started as a Fire Officer at the Felch Field Office. He was born and raised in Delta County and is a father to five. Matt started his career in fire in 2005 as a local volunteer fireman. Matt served as a keyman for the DNR between 2007 and 2011. He has worked as an auto technician with 15 years of experience, with the last 4 years as an HD technician. Matt loves the outdoors, loves to protect the community, and loves to fight fire.

Parks & Recreation Division: Doug Rich, WUP District Supervisor

Camping

Fort Wilkins Historic State Park	Went to a standardized opening and closing dates of May 15 - Oct 15. We are replacing numerous firepits and picnic tables.	<div> <div>Up</div> <div>Down</div> <div>Similar to the same period last y...</div> <div>Closed / N/A</div> </div> <div> <div>0</div> <div>0</div> <div>4</div> <div>10</div> </div> 
McLain State Park	Camping numbers were up for October at McLain however the campground closed October 15 this year, no longer offering Semi-modern camping.	
Craig Lake State Park	Camping numbers are the same upon the year. Park staff are now able to see the totals for accurate camping numbers through Camis, with Craig Lake becoming reservable.	
Twin Lakes State Park	With the lack of snow fall this fall we were able to get a good start on the leaf and brush pick-up.	
Bewabic State Park	Progress continues on ARPA projects at Bewabic State Park. Monitoring wells were drilled at specified locations, one of four were successful in reaching specified depth. Work continues.	

Overnight Lodging

Fort Wilkins HSP	Lack of snow has reduced our number of users	<div> <div>Up</div> <div>Down</div> <div>Similar to last year</div> <div>Closed / N/A</div> </div> <div> <div>1</div> <div>4</div> <div>3</div> <div>6</div> </div> 
Twin Lakes State Park	Lack of snow has resulted in no snowmobile traffic and a reduction in lodge rentals.	
McLain State Park	Overnight lodging was up in October for McLain until we had snow in the end of the month.	
Little Presque Isle State Forest RA	Overnight lodging nights for the rustic cabins were down 35 nights in 2023 from 2022's attendance numbers. One cabin was closed for renovations which attributed to some of the nights. Cabin 6 was closed this winter to help staff keep up due to staffing shortages resulting in a few less camp nights.	
Lake Gogebic Traveling Construction Crew	The crew replaced the roof at the St. Martins Cabin at Wells SP as well as a window. They also replaced the roof at the contact station at Wells in October. In late October and November, the crew replace the flooring, windows, door, wood stove and heat shield at the Teddy Lake Yurt in Craig Lake State Park. They finished renovations on the Teddy Lake Yurt in November. Improvements included new windows and framing, a new door and framing, installing a new floor, and installing a new stove.	
Van Riper SP	The Peshekee River Rustic Cabin was down 5 nights this year from the same timeframe from 2022.	

Craig Lake State Park	Overnight lodging nights are up 3 nights during the same timeframe. Rangers wrapped up the finishing touches to the remodel to the Teddy Lake Yurt during the second week of November, just prior to layoff. They included new windows, replacement door, new flooring and a new woodstove with hearth and replacement piping. The yurt looks brand new, and the work completed is beautiful. Much of the work was completed by the Lake Gogebic Crew with assistance from Van Riper staff.
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Boating Access Sites and Harbors

Lake Gogebic State Park	All skid piers were pulled at access sites during this period.	Up	0
Eagle Harbor State Harbor	Eagle Harbor Marina construction project is finished. The Department is working with Eagle Harbor Township to implement an operational lease to the township.	Down	0
Fort Wilkins Historic State Park	Warm fall allowed us to keep some of the skid piers in the water a little longer than usual.	Similar to last year	5
Twin Lakes State Park	Sandy Lake BAS was the location of an ice rescue of two fishermen who had gone through the ice. Twin lakes Fire Department Ice Rescue Team was able to rescue the fishermen and retrieve their equipment from the lake. The fishermen were taken to the local hospital for treatment.	Closed / N/A	11
Baraga Field Office	Staff performed hazardous tree trimming and removal at Big Eric's Bridge SFCG. Ramp planks were delivered to Hoist Basin BAS and a maintenance project was completed at Dead River Basin. Pulled skid piers for the winter. Yearly refurbishing of skid piers for Western UP boating access sites.		
Escanaba Field Office	Staff finished a few small projects within unit sites, and assisted Baraga Construction Crew on maintenance projects at Dead River Storage Basin. All unit skid piers removed for winter season, and ramps have been barricaded where applicable.		
Bewabic State Park	Ice fishing has begun on most lakes, BAS locations receiving use.		



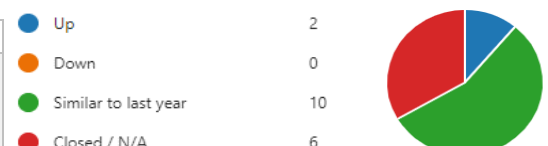
Trails

Fort Wilkins HSP	Winter use is down, but non snow related use is steady.	Up	1
Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park	No snow yet for snowmobiling or skiing. Hiking trails are similar to last year.	Down	5
McLain State Park	Not much snow at McLain so skiers and snowshoers are not in the park, hiking is still happening but not very often	Similar to last year	8
Bewabic State Park	Ranger staff have completed snowmobile trail inspections with FRD counterparts. Transition is going well so far within unit.	Closed / N/A	2
Lake Gogebic State Park	Many tasks and projects related to snowmobile trail management. Issues include grant reimbursement oversight, training, trail closures, trail re-routing, easements and many more.		
Van Riper State Park	Staff completed all snowmobile trail inspections and are continuing to learn the process of the snowmobile program.		
Baraga State Park	Lack of snow delayed opening of snowmobile trails. However, we have seen increased use of non-motorized trail use and pedestrian traffic in the campground. Without snow, rangers have been able to work on snowmobile trail inspections fairly easily.		
Little Presque Isle State Forest RA	Use numbers were down slightly from 2022's attendance numbers. Trail use remains roughly the same within the Little Presque Isle State Forest despite the lack of snow this time of year. Visitors are taking advantage of the opportunities to hike as opposed to snowshoe or ski in the state forest area.		



Day Use

Fort Wilkins Historic SP	Fort buildings winterized week of Oct 15.
Twin Lakes State Park	Lack of snow in our area has increased the number of people using the day-use area, walkers, etc.



Copper Harbor State Harbor	Had approximately 77,000 visitors to Copper Harbor Marina and BAS site for the 2023 season.
Little Presque Isle SFRA	According to the counter numbers from 2023, attendance was down slightly from 2022
McLain State Park	At McLain there isn't much for snow so the Day Users are enjoying walking through parts of the park they normally couldn't this time of year.
Baraga State Park	Normally the park would not be accessible due to snow for day use. Some locals have been taking advantage of the milder weather and taking walks in the campground and using the non-motorized trail.
Lake Gogebic Traveling Construction Crew	The crew began projects at the Porcupine Mountains Ski Chalet in December. Work included lighting in the bathrooms and enclosing the subfloor area of the A-frame.
Menominee River State RA	Work continues on MNRTF funded bridge project at Piers Gorge Unit. Currently in permitting and design phase.
Bond Falls Scenic Site	Bond Falls is closed for the season; however, the lack of snow has a lot of pedestrian traffic still on the hiking trails into and around the falls and inquiries regarding winter vehicle access.

Design, Construction, Capital Outlay and ARPA Projects

Eagle Harbor State Harbor	Eagle Harbor Marina expansion project is complete. It turned out very well.
Lake Gogebic State Park	UPEA is at 50% submittal for our phase 100 portion of the park. Planning and meeting continue on the Lake Gogebic campground improvement ARPA project scheduled to take place in 2025.
Houghton Douglass Falls Scenic Site	Continuing to move forward with Houghton Douglass Falls engineering. A public design meeting was held December 6 th at Lake Linden High School with over 60 people in attendance.
Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park	Porkies ARPA - The HQ, VC and Summit Peak paving rehab is complete. The Roof on the Lodge is complete, and the Staff Quarters renovations are coming along nicely and are nearing completion. Design meetings for the Visitors Center upgrade planning are underway. The LSSC indoor shooting range is nearing completing. Ski hill feasibility study is at 50%. Sewer renovation planning is underway.
Twin Lakes State Park	No ARPA construction has begun yet, but we are looking forward to the upgrades planned for Twin Lakes State Park that should begin in 2024.
Little Presque Isle State Forest RA	A contract was awarded for trail work to be completed within the existing trail system in the Little Presque Isle State Forest. One progress meeting has been held with another one coming in the next few weeks. Construction Progress meetings continue as the awarded contractor moves forward with planning and purchasing materials for the improvements within the Little Presque Isle State Forest trail system. Additional structure concerns have been identified and solutions are being proposed and considered to make much needed repairs and trail improvements on existing and dedicated trails.
Van Riper State Park	The Teddy Lake Yurt saw renovations completed by the Lake Gogebic Crew in later October, early November at Craig Lake State Park.
Menominee River State RA	Bridge project at Piers Gorge Unit is in the design phase.
Fort Wilkins Historic State Park	Waterline project wrapping up, campground office, new toilet building, campsite updates and historic renovations moving forward.
Bewabic State Park	Planning continues on wastewater disposal project a Bewabic SP. Four monitoring wells were drilled, only one reached specified depth and found water. Project team regrouping on drilling method and plan of action.
Craig Lake State Park	Continued planning is underway for the National Guard 2024 Innovative Readiness Training (IRT) for projects within Craig Lake State Park. Both Craig Lake and Van Riper State Parks will host the National Guard in the spring for their annual training. Projects may include cabin renovations, assistance with some drainage issues, building demolition, road work and applying additional aggregate surfacing to boating access sites. Projects have not been set in stone yet, so staff are planning for all possibilities.
Van Riper State Park	During November and December, staff have been busy with a variety of different tasks and responsibilities. Progress, design, and plan review meetings were held for the Michigan Iron Industry Museum regarding potential HVAC upgrades, roof repair/replacement, and restroom modifications. The design for this facility is ongoing.
Baraga State Park	Work continues the playground project and National Guard IRT initiatives for the upcoming season. A grant request was submitted to the mParks Foundation, Play is for All initiative for an accessible contour bench picnic table and child size picnic table for the new playground.

Special Events, Volunteer Projects, Accomplishments, Challenges or Personnel News

Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park	Fall color chairlift rides were a success with a 50% increase in riders over last year. The winter sports complex opening has been delayed due to lack of snow. We are hoping to open on January 19th... weather permitting. A brand-new Piston Bully 400 alpine ski groomer was delivered in December. This almost ½ million-dollar machine is the first new grooming equipment bought for the ski hill since the 1990s. We just need more snow!
Twin Lakes State Park	The Make a difference day group from Michigan Tech had to cancel as we had too much snow.
Van Riper State Park	A HUGE THANK YOU to Dan and Charlie from Lake Gogebic and all staff that worked on the renovations of the Teddy Lake Yurt within Craig Lake State Park. Much of the work was completed by the Lake Gogebic travelling crew and the behind-the-scenes tasks were completed by Van Riper State Park's staff. The yurt looks beautiful, and all involved should be very proud of the end result! Fantastic job to all of you!
Bewabic State Park	Boating ranger Bruce Borske laid off for November and December. It was our first season at Bewabic SP with a PI ranger. Welcome change to have a ranger on year round!
Menominee River State RA	Ranger position assigned to the Menominee River State Recreation Area is currently vacant.
District Wide Staffing	Supplemental budget allotments are allowing additional seasonal rangers at Lake Gogebic, J.W. Wells and Fort Wilkins State Parks in fiscal year 2024. Additional, full-time staff is adding a lead ranger at Bewabic and a ranger at Van Riper. This is in addition to hours added to seasonal employees to oversee the snowmobile program.
Escanaba Field Office	A brand-new John Deere 444-wheel loader is in being ordered to replace a worn-out Komatsu.

Wildlife Division: Dave Lemmien, UP Wildlife Supervisor

Personnel

- The Baraga Wildlife Technician Position job vacancy should be posted by the WUPCAC January meeting.

Fall Projects and Items

- Sharp-tailed grouse season ended on October 31st. This was the 14th year since the season re-opened in 2010. There were approximately 5,000 acres of Hunting Access Program lands available that provide public hunting access on private lands for sharptail hunting during the season. Early indicators and anecdotal reports suggest that hunters were out on HAP lands once again, and some hunters reported good success in seeing birds. Hunters come from all over Michigan and from other states to pursue sharptails in the far east UP. In 2021, 198 hunters reported over 1,900 observations and harvested 113 birds. In addition, woodcock numbers were reported to be spectacular in some areas of the east UP.
- DNR staff partnered with the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community and the Sault Saint Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians to plant wild rice at several locations in the WUP in the fall of 2023. Wild rice is an important wildlife food and of high cultural and spiritual value to tribal members.
- Shingleton staff made infrastructure improvements at Rainey Wildlife Area near Manistique, last fall, replacing portions of an old failing boardwalk with a wider gravel pathway to increase access. The remaining portions will be completed in spring.

Deer

- The Deer Camp Survey is a cooperative effort between the DNR and numerous UP hunters for the 16-day regular firearm season. This is a voluntary survey where interested participants provide sighting and harvest information during the firearm season. The survey is used to monitor deer sightings, harvest, and hunter opinions. A report of the results is sent out to participants in mid- winter. Survey materials were sent out to approximately 477 camp contacts before the 2023 firearm season.
- Once winter settles in and deer migration has occurred, staff will begin the annual opportunistic winter deer track survey concentrating in and around Deer Wintering Complexes to indicate deer presence or absence in areas of the UP in an effort to continually monitor use of wintering areas.

- **Winter Conditions:** This winter has started off with relatively mild temperatures and light snowfall in much of the UP. DNR staff monitor snow conditions weekly from early November through early May using a system called SNODAS (Snow Data Assimilation System). This allows staff to see winter snow fluctuations and have a measure for potential impacts of winter on deer and other species at the end of season.
- Staff found new ways to engage with deer hunters in this second year of mandatory harvest reporting when fewer hunters are coming into DNR offices to have their deer checked. Staff went to buck poles, encountered hunters in the woods, and hosted deer aging events to continue to engage with hunters.

Bear

- In general, the western UP had good hunter success rates that are consistent with what they have been for several years. The eastern UP had very good success rates that exceeded what they have been in recent years, resulting in increased harvest. The NLP had good success rates that were consistent to slightly below the last several years.

PRELIMINARY

2023 BEAR HUNT - REGISTRATION RESULTS Page 1
State Licensed Hunter Harvest

		BEARS	LICENSE	% of QUOTA
BMU	DESIRED HARVEST	REGISTERED	QUOTA	REGISTERED
Bergland	200	216	920	23
Baraga	300	282	1540	18
Amasa	165	170	500	34
Carney	116	133	550	24
Gwinn	150	212	885	24
Newberry	260	392	1005	39
Drummond Island	5	5	6	83
Zone 1	1196	1410	5406	26
Red Oak	317	284	685	41
Baldwin	185	132	395	33
Gladwin	26	28	100	28
Zone 2	528	444	1180	38
Total*	1724	1854	6586	28

SEX DISTRIBUTION BY UNIT OF HARVEST (State Licensed Hunter Harvest)

UNIT	UNKNOWN	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	% FEMALES
BERGLAND	0	123	93	216	43
BARAGA	0	168	114	282	40
AMASA	0	99	71	170	42
CARNEY	0	79	54	133	41
GWINN	0	134	78	212	37
NEWBERRY	0	236	156	392	40
DRUMMOND	0	4	1	5	20
ZONE 1*	0	843	567	1410	40
RED OAK	0	158	126	284	44
BALDWIN	0	64	68	132	52
GLADWIN	0	12	16	28	57
ZONE 2*	0	234	210	444	47
TOTAL*	0	1077	777	1854	42