

**Western Upper Peninsula Citizen Advisory Council (WUPCAC)**  
**Work Session Minutes – APPROVED 3/21/23**  
**Wednesday, January 18, 2023**  
**5:00-7:00pm Central / 6:00-8:00pm Eastern**  
**Virtual Meeting via Zoom**

**Council Members Present**

Erik Bessonon	Mike Holmes	Kirk Schott
Floyd Dropps	Dave Johnson	Skip Schulz
Barb Gajewski	George Lindquist	Tom Solka
Dave Hall	Horst Schmidt	

**Council Members Absent/Excused**

Carol Mason Sherrill	Travis Smith
Chauncey Moran	Warren Suchovsky-Vice Chair

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

Kristi Dahlstrom, Executive Division, Marquette  
Stacy Haughey, UP Field Deputy, Executive Division, Marquette  
Tom Seablom, Forest Resources Division, Marquette

**Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance/Roll Call**

At 6:00pm Eastern, **Mr. Tom Solka** called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. **Mr. Solka** chaired the work session in the absence of Chair Lorenson who retired in December. He asked Ms. Dahlstrom to read the names of all those attending virtually and then led the group with the Pledge of Allegiance. He explained the intent of this first Council work session is to review the summary and recommendations from the MSU-facilitated survey/sessions the Council participated in last fall, along with setting meeting dates, locations, and agenda topics for the upcoming year. To allow adequate discussion time, he added that no action items or natural resource topics were placed on the agenda and divisional staff attendance was optional.

**Adoption of Agenda**

**Mr. Solka** asked the Council if there were any further additions or revisions to the agenda; none were brought forth. **Dr. Schott** motioned to accept the agenda as presented; **Mr. Hall** supported the motion. **Ayes: All. Nays: None. Absent: See page 1. No further discussion. Motion carried.**

**Acknowledgement of Previous Meeting Minutes**

**Mr. Solka** acknowledged the Council's receipt of the December 5, 2022 meeting minutes; however, approval of them has been deferred to the March meeting.

**DNR Division Reports**

Written staff reports were provided to Council members on November 28, 2022. **Ms. Haughey** indicated if there were any questions from items included in the reports, she would collect them for a later response.

- **Mr. Lindquist** indicated he'd like to know if the DNR has had any new hires. **Ms. Haughey** noted the Law Enforcement Division provided an update at the last meeting indicating the latest recruit school was graduating in December. She also indicated the Crystal Falls DNR Office recently filled their front office position. The Wildlife Division provided a hiring recap of their UP positions in the report. **Mr. Seablom**, who was present, stated the Forest Resources Division will be filling vacancies over the next 10-12 months due to retirements and promotions. Positions in the UP being filled include a fire officer in Norway, a mechanic in Marquette, a unit manager and a fire supervisor in Crystal Falls and a fire supervisor in the East UP. There will also be several

forest technician vacancies to fill over the next 6-8 months. He noted that Mr. Jason Caron in Marquette recently filled the commercial forest position held by Mr. Ernie Houghton.

- **Mr. Dropps** asked about the status of the proposed Marquette County shooting range. **Ms. Haughey** indicated a pre-bid meeting was held about two months ago, the construction bid was awarded, and they are now going forward through the process. She stated the goal is to have it open by fall.
- **Mr. Schulz** asked if it is possible for any state land that becomes available in the Ontonagon area to be designated for a school forest. **Mr. Seablom** indicated there are opportunities in that area, and it is possible to piggyback onto school forests that already exist there.
- **Mr. Schulz** also noted social media comments have indicated there is a legal court challenge on aftermarket pipes for snowmobiles and asked if there was any knowledge on that topic. **Ms. Haughey** indicated she will refer the question to Lt. Aho or Mr. Yesney for a response.

### **Work Session Items**

**Mr. Solka** indicated the following items relate to two planning sessions that were held in October and November with MSU Facilitators Will Cronin and Elliot Nelson. He noted the sessions were very revealing and the report summary and recommendations will be reviewed and discussed. The UP Citizens' Advisory Councils began in 2008 and although there have been a few revisions of the Council's charter and bylaws over the years, it was time to take a look at the entire process and make recommendations that may be necessary to continue with Councils' goals and objectives.

1. Review Council Role/Expectations (UPCAC Charter, WUPCAC Bylaws): Roles and expectations for both the Councils and members are defined in two documents, the UPCAC Charter and a set of bylaws for both the West UPCAC and the East UPCAC.
  - **Early Rally**: The Councils were created after 300+ people gathered at a sportsman's rally in Marquette in early 2008. The message was clear that something had to change in the way the DNR was communicating with the UP sporting public. Several current members of the Council attended that rally. The first meetings of the Councils were contentious. A lot has changed with the Councils since then, and communication has been at the forefront.
  - **UPCAC Charter-Key Highlights**: The two main functions of the UPCACs and the primary purpose/roles were reviewed, including the importance of members assisting to inform the broader public about DNR information they learn of at the meetings. There is always so much information circulating in the public. The expected outcome of the process and scope of the UPCAC's authority, which is advisory in nature and does not have decision-making abilities or authority over any other current advisory group used by the DNR, was also covered. **Ms. Haughey** stated the UPCACs are a priority, which was reinforced by DNR Director Eichinger at the October 12<sup>th</sup> CAC planning session with Acting Director Lott in attendance. She replayed a video with the Director's commentary from that session: The Councils *"are extremely important for the work that we do...I appreciate all that you do."* She indicated the latest rumors suggesting the Councils will be dissolved are very untrue. This planning process was an invested effort to continue to improve the highly valued work of the Councils.
  - **WUPCAC Bylaws**: The bylaws govern membership and operating procedures of the council, including attendance, council structure, etc. The resolution process and subcommittee format implemented in 2013 were also reviewed; this process has greatly streamlined meeting time.

2. Review MSU Facilitator Summary & Key Recommendations from CAC Planning Sessions: **Ms. Haughey** thanked Council members for participating in this important process and thanked DNR staff for providing their insightful input as well. The summary has been shared internally with DNR division chiefs and leadership as well as with UPCAC divisional staff. The following four key recommendations were gleaned by the facilitators after in-person and virtual planning sessions and surveys with Council members and DNR divisional staff.
- (1) Streamline meeting planning and agendas:
    - *Move meetings around each regional CAC's area of responsibility*: Meeting locations are rotated in the western UP (Houghton, Ironwood, Marquette, Baraga, Escanaba, Iron Mountain) and in the Eastern UP (Newberry, Sault Ste. Marie, St. Ignace, Munising). Note that meetings are every other month in each region, totaling 6 meetings per year per Council.
    - *Have local DNR staff provide updates at each meeting*: The Division Reports will still be produced for each meeting; however, not all staff may be present if the focus at each meeting were to be staggered.
    - *Plan for meeting topics and in-person staff/division reports at CAC meeting well ahead of time*: This will be touched on later in the slides.
    - *End expectation that all divisions be present at all meetings*: This contradicts the second item above; however, this may have come from staff feedback and the other item came from council member feedback.
    - *Discussion*:
      - **Mr. Schulz** indicated he prefers to have all divisions attend and represented due to the variety of questions that typically arise. **Ms. Haughey** stated there are some instances in which staff has attended but weren't asked any questions so there was some thought that their attendance could be staggered.
      - **Mr. Schmidt** asked if attendance had anything to do with in-person meetings versus attending via zoom. **Ms. Haughey** stated she believed it had more to do with time commitment.
      - **Mr. Lindquist** stated he sees it as a time and money issue related to traveling to these meetings with the division report already submitted. While he enjoys having everyone present, he can understand. Having advanced planning of agenda topics would help. **Ms. Haughey** agreed, although noting that some questions asked during a meeting would not be answered without the right staff present.
      - **Mr. Johnson** stated his recollection during the planning meetings was the discussion ended indicating it was valuable to have staff present even though they may not get questions, but it was convenient to talk to them before and after the meetings. **Ms. Haughey** indicated that may be why the second and fourth sub-recommendations were contradictory.
      - **Mr. Schmidt** stated he feels it would be helpful to have virtual meetings in the winter months for everyone as it relates to time involved, safety, and to reduce energy consumption. **Ms. Haughey** stated it definitely can be a consideration.
      - **Mr. Solka** summarized the discussion noting the Council prefers staff attendance at all meetings. However, if there was a concerted effort made to stagger attendance, it is understood that staff can attend any time they wish. He also stated that he understands the Council will not be discouraged from discussing any particular subject if an appropriate divisional staff was not present. **Ms. Haughey** stated previously staff attended all 6 meetings as an available resource. However, to accommodate schedules, trying a staggering approach with focused topics and staff attendance was an option for this year.

- **Mr. Besson** stated he feels the goal with this recommendation was to streamline the agendas as they have been so broad with many divisional topics in the past and there wasn't enough time to really discuss issues.
- **Dr. Schott** stated perhaps there needs to be a distinction between requiring attendance and requesting attendance.
- **Ms. Haughey** asked for a show of hands for how many Council members would support ending the expectation that staff attend but reserve the right to request attendance for specific topics: 8 of 13 Council members would support this option.
  
- (2) Improve communications:
  - *Develop improved social media presence for CAC:* The DNR has a Facebook page, however, the UPCAC's are unable to have one due to social media policies, staffing/time to manage it and the likelihood of unsolicited negative comments that tend to surface with pages like this. CAC press releases are published on the DNR's Twitter feed for UP subscribers (which tend to be younger). Perhaps members can share meeting notices on their personal FB pages.
  - *Focus on expanding presence in traditional media due to lack of internet service:* The CAC press release process was explained. UP news media considers their audience before printing the press release, for example, if a meeting is in Houghton, the Marquette media may choose not to run it as their readership is not in Houghton. This is the limitations of print media. According to John Pepin, Deputy PIO in the UP, CAC press releases are received by 31,691 UP subscribers (as of 1/12/2023) through the DNR news delivery system. Various radio outdoor shows also receive the meeting notices.
  - *Discussion:*
    - **Mr. Johnson** noted some people are not on social media due to security issues.
    - **Mr. Schmidt** asked if a large title is put on press releases; **Mr. Haughey** noted that Mr. Pepin has to follow state press release guidelines, but it does include all meeting information as well as a brief description of the UPCACs at the bottom.
    - **Mr. Dropps** stated he feels Ms. Haughey and Ms. Dahlstrom do a great job sharing the releases and DNR information. He often forwards the information to his groups. **Ms. Haughey** stated the sharing of meeting information and division reports is high on the priority list. She also suggested sending the press release to Council members as it has not been sent in the past.
    - **Mr. Solka** stated from his perspective, he feels there has been good coverage in his local print and TV media sources; he's not sure much more can be done. He also doesn't see any benefit to the CACs being involved on Facebook. He stated council members bear some responsibility to get the word out.
    - **Mr. Schulz** mentioned from his media background, if the press release is too general, it will not be picked up by print media. He feels the content of the release needs to focus on specific topics of interest.
    - **Mr. Lindquist** stated signing up for the DNR news delivery system by email is very beneficial. Overall, one might get the same information from a few sources, but better to receive it multiple times rather than not at all.
    - **Mr. Hall** reminded the group that getting youth involved as much as possible is important for the future and however that can be done, whether through the Council or through the advancement of youth programs, is paramount.
  - *Proactively invite stakeholders to attend meetings:* Ms. Dahlstrom has an extensive email listing including past council members, organizational representatives (MUCC, MiSORVA) and anyone wishing to receive DNR related materials including meeting press releases. The release, meeting agenda and division reports are also emailed to local city/county officials in the city the meeting is held, NRC

Commissioners, UP legislative offices and staff, etc. **Ms. Haughey** stated NRC Commissioners have attended CAC meetings based on the meeting notices received and especially those held virtually. She added the NRC is very complimentary of the CACs work.

- *Standardize process of reporting to CAC across DNR divisions:* A report of CAC meeting activity each month is shared with the DNR’s Resource Bureau meeting (DNR leadership staff meeting) and also with the Director and various divisional leadership staff on a monthly basis.
  - **Ms. Haughey** asked the group for clarification of this item, whether it pertains to the division reports or something else.
  - **Mr. Solka** indicated the reports provide extraordinary detail and he is quite pleased with them. **Mr. Schulz** agreed.
  - **Mr. Dropps** indicated he’d like to see a more standardized process in responding to resolutions with more of an explanation on why staff were objectionable to the suggestion, what other alternatives had been investigated, or indicate if it’s time sensitive, that it cannot be dealt with at that time. It would help to get a better understanding of the DNR on their position on resolutions.
- (3) Diversify the CACs:
  - *Establish onboarding process for new CAC members:* There are always opportunities to improve the onboarding process. The pandemic years created isolation for new members that came on board during that time with no in-person connections to the Council.
  - *Conduct outreach to silent sport and other nontraditional outdoor user groups:* One silent sport group was encouraged to have a member apply for the Council, but no response was received. Any other ideas or suggestions?
  - *Hold meetings once annually on college campuses in both regions:* Each year, a meeting is typically held at MTU in Houghton for the WUPAC and at LSSU in Sault Ste. Marie for the EUPCAC. Student attendance at these locations will be encouraged for future meetings. There is also a state requirement to hold state agency meetings at educational facilities, local government facilities, etc. **Ms. Haughey** also mentioned there have been WUPCAC and EUPCAC members that have had an educational backgrounds as well.
  - *Discussion:*
    - **Mr. Solka** suggested having a few original Council members still serving share their own personal observations and experience for new members coming on board to help them understand where the DNR was in 2008 compared to where things stand today in relation to the Councils. **Ms. Haughey** indicated she recently shared the rally slides from 2008 at one of the DNR management team meetings since many of them weren’t with the DNR in 2008.
    - **Mr. Lindquist** stated he feels the CACs are already very diverse in its membership with a wide variety of interests. **Ms. Dahlstrom** stated not all Council members are aware of each other’s interests, which may have prompted this suggestion, and that she will work to include those on the rosters. **Mr. Solka** feels that silent sports (cross country skiing, birdwatching, backpacking, camping, etc.) are very well represented on the WUPCAC. **Mr. Schulz** indicated the subcommittee he is a part of has helped him immensely in understanding the needs of equestrian users.
    - **Mr. Solka** also mentioned he attended a North Country Trail Association meeting and introduced himself as a WUPCAC member. He stated NCTA trails and DNR trails frequently intersect and he would be happy to bring any items of interest back to the NCTA meetings if needed.

- (4) Strengthen relationship between CACs and DNR administration:
  - *DNR staff should communicate more proactively with the CAC about upcoming projects and resolutions; ideally CAC would have input before actions are taken:* **Ms. Haughey** indicated the CAC charter and bylaws focus on a regional perspective and questioned if this item related more to statewide projects.
  - *Develop a process for CAC leaders to interact informally with DNR administration:* The annual Joint UPCAC meeting is the main event in which CAC members interact with NRC Commissioners and DNR administration. In the past, both UPCAC chairs would address the NRC during public comment at the annual UP NRC meeting each year about current CAC items; they will be added to speak this year.
  - *Discussion:*
    - **Mr. Lindquist** stated he noted a potential timeline issue for deer regulations for the WUPAC agenda themes depending on when the NRC addresses them on their agenda. **Ms. Haughey** noted she will adjust the agenda timeline once more is known. She also indicated adjustments can be made throughout the year for time-sensitive action issues.
    - **Mr. Johnson** noted the current NRC is one of the most reactive commissions that he's seen. The NRC really does want to take things up, work on them, and go through the process.
    - **Mr. Bessonon** indicated the first item really refers to UP DNR staff (not downstate staff) and having them be more collaborative with the CACs.
    - **Ms. Haughey** stated the Joint UPCAC meeting will be held on October 11, 2023, the day before the UP NRC Meeting, both of which will be held in Escanaba. An informal meet-and-greet will be planned after the Joint UPCAC meeting as has been done the last few years, which provides a great opportunity to talk and visit with NRC commissioners and DNR administration.
- 3. Approval of 2023 Meeting Dates & Locations: Six meeting dates and locations for 2023 were proposed (5 regular meetings and one joint meeting with the East UPCAC). Two date changes were made for March and May and locations were switched for May and July. The final schedule will be emailed to Council members and location venues will be arranged.
- 4. Determine Agenda Topics for Each Meeting: General guidelines for agenda preparation were reviewed. Agendas are created in combination with the Council, Chair and UP Field Deputy. Topics can be requested by Council members with concurrence by the Chair and UP Field Deputy. Presenters must be a Council member or DNR staff, unless approved by the Chair and UP Field Deputy. Those wishing to present at a Council meeting about a specific topic can register for public comment. Agendas/topics for upcoming meetings are discussed and finalized at a pre-meeting held two weeks before each meeting with the Council Chair, UP Field Deputy and DNR staff. The goal in determining focus areas this year for each meeting is to ensure appropriate staff are present to answer related questions. Written division reports from staff will still be requested for each meeting.
  - March 21: Fisheries/Law, Introduction of New Members, CAC Officer Selections, Committee Selections
  - May 17: Wildlife/NRC-Potential Wildlife Orders
  - July 10: Parks, Boating, Trails
  - September 6: Forestry, Marketing & Outreach
  - October 11 (Joint UPCAC): DNR Budget Overview/Restricted Funds, DNR Budget Priorities for New Fiscal Year, DNR Updates, Local & Lansing Staff/NRC Commissioners in attendance
- *Discussion:*
  - **Ms. Haughey** stated agenda themes were established to allow staff to plan for topics and attendance. All staff will be invited to attend all meetings; however, to allow flexibility, they may decide not to attend a

meeting that doesn't have a specific agenda item. This coincides with the recommendations from the facilitated planning sessions.

- **Mr. Dropps** asked about how resolutions will be handled. **Ms. Haughey** reminded the group resolutions are submitted to the DNR Director (not the NRC) and responses come from the respective division or the Director. She does make sure the NRC is aware of them, however. She indicated the NRC doesn't have a specific agenda schedule except for deer regulations this year. Resolutions can be submitted as needed and as long as there is sufficient notice given, she can work to have staff available to discuss them. Discussion ensued. **Ms. Dahlstrom** added staff input at the subcommittee level for resolutions may prove helpful before it comes to the full Council. **Ms. Haughey** indicated staggered staff involvement is a new process and there will be some hiccups along the way; she asked for everyone's patience and flexibility.
- **Mr. Dropps** further indicated his concerns with a timely DNR response to submitted resolutions; **Mr. Johnson** concurred. **Ms. Haughey** strongly encouraged staff involvement at the subcommittee meetings if a resolution is being prepared and/or discussed to gain their input and suggestions. She also asked that she and Ms. Dahlstrom be kept informed of a resolution being considered to aid in responsiveness.

5. Consider Committee Involvement for 2023: The current committee structure was established by former Chair Phil Wirtanen in 2013 to allow for better use of meeting time and to streamline the resolution process. Current committees include Fisheries, Forestry, Wildlife/Field Operations, and Trails/Recreation/Law. Members were reminded to consider adding themselves to a committee or two at the next meeting and to possibly consider a lead role for two of them.

6. CAC Selection Process Update: **Ms. Haughey** reviewed the current status of new member selection. 7 current WUPCAC members are seeking term renewal and 16 applications have been received to date for 6 openings on the WUPCAC. General applicant demographics (residence county, interests) were noted. The CAC Selection Team will meet on January 31 to consider renewals and choose new members for open positions on both the East and West CACs. The Team consists of 4 UP representatives and 4 DNR staff. After a background and approval process, new members will be introduced at the March meeting. Onboarding and orientation will occur before then.

7. Additional Discussion:

- **Mr. Schulz** asked if Zoom could be utilized for subcommittee meetings. **Ms. Dahlstrom** stated Zoom or the phone conference call line can be used. Those interested can contact Ms. Dahlstrom for assistance.
- **Mr. Lindquist** stated it would be good to continue to have representatives from the Law Enforcement Division attend all CAC meetings, since many topics overlap with their division, and it is nice to have their input. **Ms. Haughey** stated many times new officers attend for public interaction as well.

### **Next Meeting**

1. Next Meeting Date/Location: **Mr. Solka** indicated the next meeting, as agreed to earlier, will be Tuesday, March 21 at 6:00pm, most likely at the Marquette Township Community Center, though not yet confirmed. This will be an in-person meeting.
2. Review of Agenda Topics Planned for Next Meeting: **Mr. Solka** reviewed the topics mentioned earlier for the March meeting (Fisheries/Law-related topics, Introduction of New Members, CAC Officer Selections, Committee Selections). Anything additional can be sent to Ms. Haughey or Ms. Dahlstrom for consideration.

**Closing Comments from the Council**

**Mr. Solka** opened the floor for closing comments from the Council.

- **Mr. Dropps** thanked **Mr. Solka** for helping out in chairing the meetings. He feels he does an excellent job.
- **Mr. Lindquist** informed the Council a local outdoor writer has been hospitalized and expressed his wishes for a successful recovery.

**Adjournment**

**Mr. Solka** thanked everyone for attending the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 8:00pm Eastern/7:00pm Central.