

Western Upper Peninsula Citizen Advisory Council (WUPCAC)

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, January 7, 2021

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

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Chairman: Jim Lorenson - Vice-Chairman: Warren Suchovsky

Council Members Present

Jim Baker	Dave Johnson	Kirk Schott
Floyd Dropps	George Lindquist	Skip Schulz
Joan Duncan	Jim Lorenson	Travis Smith
Barb Gajewski	Chauncey Moran	Tom Solka
Dave Hall	Mary Peterson	Trevor St. John
Mike Holmes	Horst Schmidt	Warren Suchovsky

Council Members Absent/Excused

None

Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Staff & Guests

Lt. Ryan Aho, Law Enforcement Division, Crystal Falls
Ashley Autenrieth, Wildlife Division, Gaylord
Asst Chief Steve Burton, Law Enforcement Division, Lansing
Kristi Dahlstrom, Executive Division, Marquette
John DePue, Wildlife Division, Baraga
Patrick Hanchin, Fisheries Division, Marquette
Stacy Haughey, UP Field Deputy, Executive Division, Marquette
George Madison, Fisheries Division, Baraga
Cody Norton, Wildlife Division, Marquette
Dave Nyberg, Natural Resources Commission, Skandia
Doug Rich, Parks & Recreation Division, Baraga
JR Richardson, Natural Resources Commission, Ontonagon
Brian Roell, Wildlife Division, Marquette
Carol Rose, Chair, Natural Resources Commission, Hillman
Tom Seablom, Forest Resources Division, Marquette
Bill Scullon, Wildlife Division, Norway
Jay Wesley, Fisheries Division, Plainwell
Ron Yesney, Parks & Recreation Division-UP Trails, Marquette

Welcome & Call to Order

At 6:00pm Eastern, **Chair Lorenson** called the meeting to order with 65 participants in virtual attendance.

Ms. Haughey, DNR UP Field Deputy, introduced herself and thanked Council members, DNR staff, guests and NRC Commissioners Carol Rose, Chair, JR Richardson from Ontonagon, and Dave Nyberg from Skandia for joining the meeting. She indicated the meeting will be guided with a powerpoint presentation and asked those attending to review a slide with virtual meeting tips. She then provided an overview of the Upper Peninsula Citizens' Advisory Councils (East and West), which are advisory groups to the DNR. She thanked the group of volunteer members who put a lot of time and energy into conversations and discussions and between the two Councils, over 90 resolutions have been put forth for DNR consideration with many of them implemented.

Chair Lorensen led the Pledge of Allegiance. He then introduced members of the Council by way of a listing shown on screen, stating they represent the western UP counties on a variety of interests.

Adoption of Agenda

Chair Lorensen asked the Council if there were any additions or revisions to the agenda. None were brought forth. He noted an amendment under Public Comment, adding Ms. Nancy Warren before Mr. Gary Gorniak as 5a. and 5b. respectively, and then adding Communications as 6. **Vice Chair Suchovsky motioned to accept the agenda as amended; Mr. Lindquist supported the motion. Ayes: All. Nays: None. Absent: None. No further discussion. Motion carried.**

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

Chair Lorensen asked if there were any changes to the November 10, 2020 WUPCAC meeting minutes that were distributed to the Council via email for review. None were brought forth. **Mr. Schulz motioned to accept the minutes as submitted; Mr. Hall supported the motion. Ayes: All. Nays: None. Absent: None. No further discussion. Motion carried.**

DNR Reports from Division Staff & Follow-Up from Last Meeting

Written staff reports were provided to Council members on December 30, 2020. The following verbal updates were provided.

- **Ms. Stacy Haughey, UP Field Deputy:** Ms. Haughey noted follow-up from the last meeting was included in the written division reports: Status of antlerless permits (requested by Mr. St. John), update on the AuTrain Dam, clarification of supplemental versus recreational feeding (requested by Mr. Schulz), and an explanation of the calculation used for the UP CWD surveillance prevalence (requested by Ms. Gajewski). She also mentioned a press release that is forthcoming about a partnership with several county road commissions regarding a winter access pilot project for ice fishing at several boating access sites (several were listed on screen). The pilot includes 26 sites that will be kept open to allow for ice fishing opportunities. **Mr. Dropps** asked about the status of access to Shank Lake. **Ms. Haughey** indicated a letter was sent to the landowner and consultation with the DNR's legal division is taking place to have the access gate removed at Shank Lake.
- **Mr. George Madison, Fisheries Division:** **Mr. Madison** noted the weather has cooperated nicely for ice anglers with little snow and cold nights, allowing anglers to get out to lakes that are typically inaccessible because of heavy snow. He encouraged folks to get out and enjoy ice fishing. He introduced Mr. Jay Wesley and Mr. Patrick Hanchin, basin coordinators, who were also attending the meeting this evening.
- **Mr. Tom Seablom, Forest Resources Division:** **Mr. Seablom** mentioned the DNR will be offering free fuelwood permits again this year statewide and may begin prior to the traditional April 1st date due to the lack of snow; he further explained. **Mr. Suchovsky** asked if people can access logging jobs that were completed earlier in the year to harvest what has been left behind. **Mr. Seablom** stated yes, as long as the contracts are closed. If they are not closed, arrangements would need to be made between the producer and the individual. **Mr. Schulz** asked if there is anything more he can do to promote school forests with local schools; **Mr. Seablom** replied he will investigate what can be done and get back to him.
- **Lt. Ryan Aho, Law Enforcement Division:** **Lt. Aho** indicated perch fishing has been very good at Lake Gogebic and officers have been giving spending a bit of time there as sub legal size walleye is also being caught. He also noted snowmobilers have been having a tough time sledding and incurring problems with overheating, hitting

rocks, etc. due to the lack of snow in the western UP. **Mr. Lindquist** stated he has read in the reports over time an issue of individuals blocking access to state or CFA land and asked how frequently this occurs. **Lt. Aho** explained different scenarios officers encounter with blocked access and how every situation is unique and dealt with in different ways. **Mr. Schulz** asked if there could be some release sent out about CFA land not always being open to snowmobiling. **Lt. Aho** indicated there are several educational initiatives currently in place to educate snowmobilers on where they can and cannot ride. **Mr. Yesney** spoke about the Ride Right and Ride Here Campaigns with posters on each going to all grant sponsors. He stated if there is a known trespass issue in certain areas, there are new improved signage that can be placed indicating it is an enforcement area and fines and tickets are possible if caught. He noted trespass issues are the number one cause in losing trails and access. **Mr. Schulz** thanked Mr. Yesney for his trail work. **Lt. Aho** noted CFA land is open to hunting and fishing but does not include motor vehicle access and unless there is permission from the landowner, it is considered private land and ORVs and snowmobiles are not permitted.

- **Mr. Doug Rich, Parks & Recreation Division:** **Mr. Rich** acknowledged groomers have not been able to groom trails because of the lack of snow. He mentioned Fort Wilkins Historic State Park will have its water lines replaced beginning in August to allow for state archeologists and historical center to conduct evaluations prior to construction. This will cause the closure of the east campground in August; the west campground will stay open throughout. He also noted that park supervisor Mr. Zach Bishop from the Escanaba Office recently was blessed with a healthy baby girl yesterday. **Mr. Solka** stated although other outdoor enthusiasts are experiencing issues with the lack of snow, he feels the Van Riper staff involved in Blueberry Ridge Ski Pathway have been doing an outstanding job of communicating to the cross-country skiing community on conditions and grooming. **Mr. Lindquist** asked if there will be fishing allowed at the Copper Harbor marina with the latest improvements occurring there. **Mr. Rich** clarified that improvements are being made, with a \$1.2 million appropriation, at the Eagle Harbor marina which hasn't been updated since Nixon was president.
- **Mr. Ron Yesney, Parks & Recreation Division-UP Trails:** **Mr. Yesney** stated 67 miles of year-round multi-use permanent easements that was listed as pending in the report have now been purchased and finalized. He noted he is very thankful to the property owners for allowing this to happen.
- **Mr. John DePue, Wildlife Division:** **Mr. DePue** added the division received funding from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund to replace a bridge across the Arnheim ditch in the Sturgeon River Slues Wildlife Management Area, which will benefit waterfowl management activities as well as the snowmobile trail through that area. He noted several DNR Wildlife Division staff were participating in the meeting this evening to answer questions related to a multitude of wildlife topics. **Mr. Lindquist** asked about a winter deer track survey. **Mr. DePue** stated staff have been conducting the survey for a few years and they are working to make it more formal in order to get an index of deer on the landscape.

Chair Lorensen thanked staff for their follow-up and for their comments this evening, stating the Council appreciates the work they are doing.

Public Comment on Agenda Items Only

Chair Lorensen restated the Council is an advisory group to the DNR and is not a decision-making body in terms of natural resource policy. He stated this portion of the agenda is to provide comments on issues the Council will be discussing on the agenda and if there are questions, the more appropriate format would be to email to Ms. Haughey who will obtain the answers and share them with the Council. He opened the floor to those who previously registered to comment on agenda items:

1. *Mr. Mike Veine of AuGres (Camp in Rock) – 5 min:* Mr. Veine, an avid deer hunter, spoke about the proposed deer regulations, stating he is very disappointed in each of the five bulleted items for the UP. He indicated deer numbers in his area seem to be at an all-time low. He addressed each item individually noting how each would not build deer numbers back up. He also referenced a change in supplemental feeding regulation. He stated he hopes the Natural Resources Commission realizes the problems with the proposed recommendations. **Ms. Haughey** apologized, clarifying the first DNR press release that was issued incorrectly stated there was a change recommended to the *supplemental* feeding regulation. A corrected second press release was issued noting the recommendation was for *recreational* feeding, but many did not see it. She stated she would forward the correct release to him for reference.
2. *Mr. Matt Halonen of Calumet – 5 min:* Mr. Halonen spoke about how he always used to buy a combo tag, targeting bucks during rifle season and if he didn't get one, he would go out in December and take a doe for meat in the freezer. He stated he feels traditional bow hunters have little effect on the doe herd. He would like to be able to shoot an antlerless deer with the combo tag.
3. *Mr. Keith Hill of Hubbard Lake (Camp in Kenton) – 5 min:* Registered but did not attend.
4. *Mr. David Chords of Paradise – 5 min:* Mr. Chords stated he also has experienced horrible deer hunting the last two years in the eastern UP, which he said was also seen in the bridge counts as well. He agrees the proposed regulation changes will be very detrimental to what deer are left in the UP. He stated he doesn't understand the special lottery system that was previously discussed as there aren't enough deer to satisfy that system. He believes deer season should be cancelled for a few years until the deer herd bounces back and he also believes the wolf population is contributing to decimating what deer remain.
5. *Ms. Nancy Warren of Ewen – 5 min:* Ms. Warren started by noting she did not receive a copy of the Council's resolution in her packet and will speculate as to what it includes. She stated there is no scientific need for a hunting or trapping season, noting the wolf population in the UP has remained steady for the past 10 years, which is consistent with science, and therefore, there is no need to reduce the wolf population by any artificial number. She further stated predation on livestock as been low and when there is a conflict, it needs to be addressed immediately and not five months later through a hunting season. She indicated research also suggests that wolves actually benefit the deer population and may even limit the spread of CWD, something that is concerning to all deer hunters. Research shows that indiscriminate killing of wolves through hunting and trapping can cause conflicts because of pack disruption. She reminded everyone that by an overwhelming majority, Michigan voters rejected a wolf hunting season, and she urged the Council to vote no on the proposed resolution.
6. *Mr. Gary Gorniak of St. Ignace -5 min:* Mr. Gorniak introduced himself as Vice Chair of the Eastern UP Citizens' Advisory Council. He stated he is not anti-wolf in any way; a wolf has its place in wildlife, but like all wildlife, wolves must be managed. He noted as of January 4, 2021, the gray wolf became delisted and is now back under state management. In 2015, the Michigan Wolf Management Plan was revised, but it does not include anything about the effects of wolves on other wildlife such as deer, moose, beaver, snowshoe hare, etc. The plan does not indicate the ideal number of wolves on the landscape. The resolution up for consideration includes the addition of hunting and trapping as legal methods of harvest and includes a goal of maintaining 300-400 wolves in the UP. This same resolution has been passed by the Michigan United Conservation Clubs by a 78.6% margin. It has also been supported by the Upper Peninsula Sportsman's Alliance and the Eastern UP Citizens' Advisory Council passed it unanimously. He stated wolves have had a devastating effect on the UP deer herd and in the last 20 years, deer harvest has dropped over 69%. In 2000, 98,000 deer were harvested across the UP. In 2019, 31,000 were harvested and he is sure that 2020 will be even lower than that. He closed by saying a lot of the wildlife in the UP is not thriving and it needs to be fixed and passing the resolution is a step in the right direction.

7. **Communications:** **Chair Lorensen** took this time to acknowledge email and phone communications received by the Council regarding wolves and the proposed deer regulations from Mr. Crupi of Marquette, Mr. Mullins, Gary from Cornell and Mr. Vickerman of Crystal Falls. Copies of the communications were sent to the Council for reference prior to the meeting.
8. **Additional Comments:** **Chair Lorensen** asked if there were any additional comments from public attendees.
 - *Mr. Jordan Hoover of Baraga County UP Whitetails* stated hunters in Baraga County are growing concerned with the more regional approach of managing DMU's, noting that sound scientific management needs to be applied to each DMU and not regionally. He stated he agreed with the speaker from Calumet to allow a doe harvest in the archery season which would be appropriate in his area. He noted there seems to be plenty of deer in the Huron Mountain area and felt poor weather most likely had an impact on local harvest this season. He noted he was also concerned that the DNR was not actively seeking harvest data to receive a successful hunter patch.

Old Business

1. 2021 UP Deer Regulations Recommendations (continued discussion from last meeting): **Ms. Autenrieth**, DNR Deer Program Biologist for northern Michigan, reviewed the proposed deer regulations that are being presented to the Natural Resources Commission.
 - *Deer Harvest Registration:* She explained the proposed regulations are outside of the regular three-year regulation cycle due to changes for mandatory registration, which will be voluntary for 2021 and mandatory in 2022 under the new online system.
 - *Standardized Antlerless License:* Each individual license could be permissible to use in the lower peninsula and areas in the south central portion of the UP on public or private land with permission. There would be a slight restructuring of DMUs in the UP. For the mid snowfall regions, there would be a drawing for a set number of antlerless licenses, a 1,000 quota each in the west and east UP. She stated in reviewing data of past antlerless harvest history, it is anticipated if all licenses were sold, only a third would be harvested. This would equate to roughly 300 deer for the entire DMU in the east, entire mid-UP DMU in the west and the northernmost DMU would continue to be closed for antlerless harvest during the firearm season.
 - *Removal of Hunter's Choice:* This would remove the 3-point antler point restriction on the regular tag of the combination license in the UP. She stated in reviewing the biological data, they do not feel a difference is being made in terms of age to bucks. The UP is difficult to put an antler point restriction in place because winters have such as huge impact on the herd. She stated they would rather have hunters make the decision themselves to decide what they wish to harvest.
 - *Allowance of Crossbows during the Late Archery Season:* Currently, crossbows are not allowed in the UP for late archery unless by special permit. In reviewing crossbow data, crossbows are no more successful than other archery equipment and a significant change in harvest was not seen. Therefore, scientific data supports allowing crossbows in the late season.
 - *Changes to Supplemental & Recreational Feeding:* This is to simplify supplemental feeding in the UP by no longer requiring a permit. Among other safety, clarification and consistency changes, a change is recommended that recreational feeding be only 2 gallons per calendar day and only 2 gallons at one time.
 - *Additional Information & Questions:* **Ms. Autenrieth** stated the approach staff took for these recommendations to look at opportunity for hunters and simplification where possible. She noted there has been a loss of 45% of hunters in the UP and it is expected another 25% will be lost in the next 10 years alone. There is a desire to make sure that those who are afield have opportunity available to them since success is a huge factor in whether someone purchases a license the following year. As for simplicity, complexity of regulations is a known barrier to new hunters. When and where it makes sense, simplification was considered. She opened the floor for questions.

- **Mr. Johnson** asked how much time she spends in the UP. **Ms. Autenrieth** stated she has not traveled from her home since the pandemic began and before that took regular vacations to the UP with her family. She stated she stays in very close contact with and has great confidence in the UP wildlife staff who are in the field each day and she tries to represent what they are seeing and asking her to do.
- **Mr. Schulz** asked if crossbows in the late archery season would have an impact when deer are herding in deer yards at that time of year. **Ms. Autenrieth** explained the data she reviewed regarding success rates of crossbow hunters and non-crossbow hunters, changes in harvest if crossbows are used in late season, and finding that hunters do not gravitate towards deer yards to hunt.
- **Commissioner Richardson** asked what her assessment of the deer count in the UP is this year. **Ms. Autenrieth** explained that due to the pandemic and check stations being limited, typical deer check data is not available. She is waiting for data to come from the deer hunter harvest survey to make an assessment.
- **Mr. Suchovsky** asked if there are less hunters in the UP than the rest of the state as there is good deer hunting in the lower peninsula and how accurate is the toll booth deer count at the Mackinac Bridge. **Ms. Autenrieth** replied the UP is about the same as the rest of Michigan in terms of hunter loss which is around 40% or more. She also indicated the DNR does not rely on bridge count data as it is not a scientific data set.
- **Mr. Lindquist** stated he feels the hunter decline is due to an already existing problem with lack of deer and lack of success. He stated he has issues with the recommendations that are designed to take more deer that the UP essentially does not have. He provided further comments on his issues with each of the regulations. **Ms. Autenrieth** responded indicating scientific data was used in making the recommendations and shows they would not have a major impact on the deer population.
- **Commissioner Nyberg** discussed the recommendation to remove hunter's choice and his discussions with hunters who like the hunter's choice regulation and who feel it is saving an age class of bucks and is making some measurable impact. **Ms. Autenrieth** stated they have found there is no biological benefit nor detriment to the current hunter's choice regulation. He asked if the data being reviewed is based on qualitative success or quantitative success when measuring hunter success. **Ms. Autenrieth** stated they use success to mean it helps a hunter make the decision to buy a license (i.e., hunter will buy a license next year because they were successful this year). Satisfaction is measured in the overall experience of hunting, such as the size of the buck, and is more of an indicator of whether a person buys a license. She noted in the lower peninsula there is no difference in satisfaction rates where an antler point restriction is in place versus those areas without it.
- **Mr. Johnson** stated it sounds like from the discussion there is a desire to sell more licenses no matter what is done as it is not hurting the herd. **Ms. Autenrieth** indicated they would like to see hunters continue hunting and new hunters start hunting due to the loss of hunters at an alarming rate. She stated for her it comes down to proper management of the resource and hunters are the still the number one manager of the deer resource.
- **Mr. St. John** asked how the DNR is going to determine what kind of quota to set in the mid-level DMUs and will antlerless harvesting be removed during hard years. He added that complaints of liberalizing antlerless harvesting mostly come from those who live in the northern UP and there are plenty of deer in the southern half of the UP and that should be carefully considered. **Ms. Autenrieth** explained how the quotas will be established by analyzing a variety of indicators such as harvest data, crop damage, winter severity, deer vehicle collisions, and predator prey research. She stated the universal antlerless license concept and the grouping of these DMUs have not been done before. She added they do not feel this system will have a population level impact in those areas. It is hoped it can be kept in place for a minimum of three years so that trends can be analyzed and if the need arises due to a biological

concern for example (harsh winter, disease issue), things can be changed midcycle. **Mr. St. John** also asked, from his forester perspective, what is the actual carrying capacity of the habitat in these DMUs and encouraged the DNR to begin seriously considering the impact on habitat the deer have in the southern UP. **Ms. Autenrieth** stated she agrees noting it is considered; however, there is no way to gauge that measurement. She indicated she has spoken to other states to see what programs they are utilizing such as browse region surveys, but there isn't anyone using a large-scale measuring program. She further explained co-managing with the Forest Resources Division to get the on-the-ground data, but it is far from measurable. She noted they continue to work towards it in the future.

- **Mr. Suchovsky** added his observation at his property in the southern UP with regards to hunter numbers, stating he has seen the number of hunters on his property expand over the years due to the addition of children and in-law family members through generations. He feels that families who hunt together are an important aspect that will help to grow the tradition and the number of hunters.
- **Mr. Lindquist** added he feels the recommended regulations will increase access for a few years, but will further drive down the deer herd, leaving nothing for those that live and hunt in the UP.

Chair Lorenson thanked Ms. Autenrieth for discussing the topic and taking the time to answer all the questions from the Council. He stated there is probably nothing more controversial for hunters and people interested in natural resources than deer management. He suggested, whichever way the NRC decides, the DNR should make a strong educational effort to help people understand the rationale for the regulations and how they apply.

Ms. Haughey thanked Ms. Autenrieth as well, stating the Council appreciates her time and expertise. She also welcomed Mr. Tony Cutler from the office of Senator Wayne Schmitt who joined the meeting.

2. Wolf Delisting Process

- **Delisting Status:** **Ms. Haughey** stated whether its deer regulations or status of wolves, the DNR is getting a lot of feedback and they are listening, staff are listening to all the comments, and the conversation is very much appreciated. She noted matters like this are why the UP Citizens' Advisory Councils were created 12 years ago, to allow for dialogue and conversations between the DNR and the public. She began by referencing the 2008 and 2015 wolf management plans which some have read in depth and others may not be aware of. They were touted as one of the top plans in the country. Between both plans, the DNR received over 4,500 comments not including all meetings that occurred, and all input was evaluated and considered. She noted the hours spent by the taskforce, citing the plan was not thrown together, but rather it was a thoughtful process a great amount of time and years spent gathering information from several different viewpoints. She also referenced the Michigan Predator Prey Study, a collaboration with the DNR and several universities and organizations which provided valuable information. She added the new DNR Wildlife Division Chief Jared Duquette worked on this study in the UP years ago. She emphasized a letter (shown on screen) the DNR Director wrote to the USFWS in July 2019 expressing his support of the delisting and that the DNR is ready to take back management of wolves in the state. She next explained the layers of authority, noting wildlife biologists cannot decide these matters. For example, she displayed a letter from the Michigan Attorney General who lists three reasons why she feels the attempt to delist the gray wolf is unlawful. Also displayed was an excerpt of a letter of intent to file legal claims from several groups. It is not known at this time whether those lawsuits were filed. She explained the DNR Director, at a previous Natural Resources Commission meeting, identified the next steps in this matter for the DNR which is to have the legal status more permanently settled given past challenges and legal history, consult with federally recognized tribal governments, and update the DNR's wolf management plan upon completion of a public attitude study in 2021. She noted, based on questions, that Wisconsin who has

already declared a hunt in 2021 pending the delisting, has a very difficult structure and layer of authority requiring that state by law to have a hunt. She stressed the high importance of the steps mentioned which includes a good amount of public interaction and input. She stated the DNR is listening to public sentiment. She also mentioned Michigan Public Acts 290 and 318 which have come into effect now that the wolf was delisted on January 4, 2021. She turned the floor to Mr. Cody Norton, large carnivore specialist, and Mr. Brian Roell, wildlife biologist, to provide a DNR perspective on the proposed Council resolution.

- **DNR Input on Resolution & Questions:** **Mr. Norton** stated he was asked to provide clarification regarding the proposed resolution the Council is considering so that everyone has the same information and to understand the current management plan in its current form. In reference to expanding the harvest area to the entire UP and a goal of maintaining a population of 300-400 gray wolves in the UP in the resolution, the current management plan was written/developed to provide strategic higher-level guidance for the management of wolves. It is very similar to how current bear and other species' management plans are written. Typically, in those plans, harvest quotas, management units, license numbers, etc. are not specified since they are operational in nature and those operational details are developed through the typical regulations process similar to the deer management regulations discussed earlier. Those details would be specified in a memo that goes to the NRC for their consideration and would ultimately be written into a wildlife conservation order. This process lets staff routinely go back to evaluate those specific details and adjust them from year to year as changes in population size, distribution, habitat, and human density occur. For example, the previous wolf management units that were established for the 2013 wolf hunting season are not anywhere within the current wolf management plan as they were set through a normal regulations process written into a wildlife conservation order. Similarly, he stated, a population goal size is not included in the management plan for the same reason. There is nothing that says operational details cannot be included in management plans, but he stated he wanted to explain and clarify what is currently in the plan and how the DNR typically writes and implements management plans for game species in Michigan. He stated if the resolution is approved, the DNR will take it into consideration as they go through the plan updating process.
 - **Mr. Schmidt** asked about the lower numbers of wolf predation compared to 5-6 years ago. **Mr. Norton** referenced the predator prey study which looked at interactions between predation, winter weather, and habitat. With the results of that study and other studies as well, severe winters are the driving force with deer populations in the UP causing deer to become more susceptible to predation from wolves, as well as from coyotes, bobcats, and black bears. **Mr. Schmidt** also mentioned the reduced dog/wolf interactions. **Mr. Roell** stated there has not been a correlation between the number of wolves and the number of dog depredations in the last 3 years. He further explained the past correlation between livestock depredations and wolves, indicating that it can vary from year to year but has leveled off. Discussion continued regarding the steady wolf population numbers and reduction in depredations.
 - **Mr. Lindquist** stated the proposed resolution is simply asking for consideration of a few points when revising the wolf management plan or order. He indicated MUCC, which is comprised of around 200 clubs and organizations, passed a similar resolution with 78% support, the UP Sportsman's Alliance passed it with 100% support and the Eastern UP CAC passed it unanimously. He stated years of wolf activity in the UP is finally having a detrimental effect on the deer herd and he hopes the Council considers passing this recommendation.
- **WUPCAC Wildlife Committee Resolution Consideration:** **Chair Lorenson** asked the Council to consider the resolution presented regarding the need for additions to the current wolf management plan. **Mr. Dropps**

motioned to accept the resolution as presented; Mr. Johnson supported the motion. Chair Lorenson asked if there was any further discussion on the resolution before a vote.

- **Mr. Solka** asked for a clarification on the size of the wolf population in the UP; **Mr. Roell** responded that it has been between 600-700 for the last 10 or 11 years and is a minimum winter count, not including pups. **Mr. Schulz** asked if wolves have had any affect on the UP moose population and if there has been an increase in wolves coming in close contact to humans. **Mr. Norton** stated in the predator prey study they did look for moose predation and did not see wolves as a significant source of mortality for moose. **Mr. Roell** concurred and explained further the difference in habitat and ranges between moose and wolves. He also stated there is very little human interaction with wolves due to their curious but mostly secretive nature.
- **Ms. Duncan** asked if the wolf population has been stable at 600 for the last few years, why would the resolution indicate a goal of 300-400. She stated she personally believes the wolf population helps to control and make a healthy deer herd and does not support the resolution. **Mr. Lindquist** stated deer numbers are down and predators are a big part of it and has been for some time. Discussion continued.

Chair Lorenson asked for the poll vote to be conducted at this time whether to support or not support the resolution presented. Ms. Dahlstrom explained the voting instructions and initiated the online poll vote conducted through Zoom which was visible to all in attendance. Results: Yes: 61% (11), No: 33% (6), Abstain: 6% (1). Absent: None. Motion carried by majority.

New Business

1. **Status of White Nose Syndrome in the UP (Deferred from Nov Mtg):** **Mr. John DePue** introduced himself and provided the following update/presentation on bats and White Nose Syndrome.
 - *What is WNS:* WNS (*Pseudogymnoascus destructans*) is a fungus that causes energy depletion (by eating away at a bat's wing membrane and organs) and impacts a whole suite of cave bat species such as little brown, northern long-eared, tri-colored and big brown bats. First discovered in dead bats in the winter of 2006 in New York. The name WNS comes from a white substance on the bat's nose and wings. Bats typically get their last meals around October to last them through the end of March or April. They hibernate in mines in Michigan because it is cold and damp. Cold temperatures suppress their physiology, and they can go long periods without food. With WNS, however, they get irritated and come out of hibernation frequently, which ramps up their energy so that by January/February, they run out of fat stores.
 - *Impact of WNS:* 90-100% mortality when WNS infects a hibernation site. WNS is the cause of northern long-eared bat (NLEB), little brown bat and tri-colored bat declines, US Fish & Wildlife Service has listed the NLEB as a threatened species. These are all winter hibernating bats in Michigan. The little brown bat is the most abundant bat in North America.
 - *WNS in Michigan:* Michigan is in its 7th year of infection. It took from the discovery in 2006 in New York to it being discovered in Michigan in 2014. A map was shown of all the counties with WNS in Michigan. The disease has spread throughout North America. All hibernacula have presence of WNS, samples are not even sent to labs anymore. Bats provide farmers \$3.7 billion of pest control services annually, which comes out to \$74 per farm acre here in Michigan. The effects on the timber industry as well as the impact of disease carrying insects not being consumed/removed by bats have not been quantified. The last estimate of the bats killed by the disease is around 9 million.
 - *WNS Impacts in Michigan:* 35 hibernacula were surveyed in 2019/2020 and survey data indicates an 89% decline of the sites surveyed post-WNS infection. Colder hibernacula continue to have a higher survival rate so there has been some decline in Michigan's abandoned mines.

- *Michigan DNR Combating WNS*: Statewide bat monitoring (disease, acoustic) was explained and how protection of critical hibernacula is of utmost importance (pictures shown). WNS treatment trials are conducted in collaboration with universities. Outreach/education, like this presentation at a Council meeting, is provided frequently. The Bat Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) is also a program Michigan is involved in.
- *Hibernacula Climate Manipulation*: An effort is taking place to conduct trials to reduce internal temperatures of an abandoned mine to 36-38 degrees since there tends to be higher survival rates in colder temperatures. Staff worked with a mine ventilation class at MTU to set up a system to near the Porkies to see it could have an effect.
- *Outreach/Education*: Programs include the Michigan Bat Festival and educational programs for teachers, for example.
- *Lake States HCP*: The Bat Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) includes Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota with Michigan being the lead state. It is a plan that needs to be approved by the US Fish Wildlife Service and provides states some protection from litigation so that forestry management practices can continue while providing conservation for federally listed bat species. All the chapters of the document have been drafted, comments were sought from stakeholders and now those comments are being reviewed for incorporation into the document. It is hoped that by early 2021, a draft of the plan will be submitted to USFWS and by the summer of 2021, it will be offered for public comment by the USFWS.
- *Questions*:
 - **Mr. St. John** asked if the DNR knows if the bat population would have been lower in the UP before there were mine shafts for them to hibernate in. **Mr. DePue** stated he believes the overwintering population would be lower without mines and that bats would have traveled a bit farther to natural limestone cave systems in Wisconsin.
 - **Mr. Schulz** asked if its possible for landowners to make artificial mine shafts for bats to hibernate in. **Mr. DePue** there have been organizations that built artificial mines, but it is difficult to manipulate the temperature that would entice bats to use them. He explained a few artificial hibernacula projects.
 - **Mr. Suchovsky** asked about how private landowners can participate with the Northern Long-eared Bat 4(d) rule (which tailors protections to areas affected by white-nose syndrome during the bat's most sensitive life stages. The rule is designed to protect the bat while minimizing regulatory requirements for landowners, land managers, government agencies and others within the species' range.). **Mr. DePue** explained.

Reports from Committee Meetings Held

Chair Lorensen opened the floor for Committee reports from those committees that held meetings.

1. Fisheries: **Mr. Dropps** provided an overview of the last Fisheries Committee meeting discussions which included an underwater spearing season for snorkelers, catch and release season for northern pike, more opportunity for sports fishermen to have input whether at DNR fishery steering committees and/or prior to the final draft of management plans, the northern pike 5-fish limit and the lack of legal size, and commercial fishing regulations. He stated they will be working on a resolution and would like some time on the next agenda to discuss it; **Chair Lorensen** agreed. **Mr. Holmes** further explained the northern pike 5-fish limit issue.
2. Forestry: **Mr. St. John** indicated there was no activity to report.

3. Trails/Recreation/Law: **Chair Lorensen** reported the Council acknowledges receipt of the DNR's response to the resolution regarding snowmobile noise and funding; it has been reviewed via email and at the last meeting. He asked committee members to let him know what days would be best to hold a meeting in January.
4. Wildlife: **Mr. Lindquist** reported the committee met previously to review and prepare the resolution voted on at this meeting and spoke about the deer regulations but decided to submit recommendations individually or through clubs. **Chair Lorensen** stated he appreciated seeing some of the recommendations submitted.

Next Meeting

1. Next Meeting Date: **Chair Lorensen** noted the next meeting will be on Thursday, March 18th beginning at 6:00pm Eastern / 5:00pm Central, held virtually.
2. Items for Next WUPCAC Meeting Agenda: **Chair Lorensen** noted at the bottom of the agenda were a list of future agenda topics which will be considered when developing the next meeting agenda.

Public Comments

Chair Lorensen opened the floor for public comment:

1. Ms. Darla Lenz, Ottawa National Forest: Ms. Lenz introduced herself as the new forest supervisor for the Ottawa National Forest office located in Ironwood as of July 2020. She provided a brief review of her background and her interest in engaging a partnership with the DNR in the UP as well as gaining input and insight from the public. She stated she appreciated attending the Council meeting this evening and has learned a great deal of information as to how to better collaborate with the DNR. She spoke about their Resource Advisory Committee and the Great American Outdoors Act that will provide resources to improve their infrastructure.
 - **Mr. Lindquist** stated he appreciates the partnership with the Ottawa National Forest on the DNR's UP Wildlife Habitat Workgroup.
 - **Chair Lorensen** also expressed appreciation to Ms. Lenz for attending the Council meeting and invited her to attend future meetings as she sees the need.
 - **NRC Commissioner Richardson** stated Ms. Lenz is a true treasure to have working with the Ottawa National Forest and stated the DNR looks forward to working with her.
 - **Mr. Suchovsky** asked about a tree planting program with the national forest, noting he has heard the national forest is 10-12 years behind in tree planting. Ms. Lenz referred to the One Trillion Trees program and explained the Ottawa National Forest had made good progress on reforestation and planting of trees and is not behind in their tree planting efforts.
 - **Ms. Duncan** stated she would be interested in participating on the Resource Advisory Committee; Ms. Lenz stated she will contact Ms. Duncan to provide more information.
 - **Dr. Schott** welcomed Ms. Lenz back to the UP, having worked with her previously.
 - **Mr. Schulz** asked if there are any new rules on the designated vehicle use map. Ms. Lenz stated she is not aware of any new rules.
 - **Mr. Moran** spoke about an interest to partner with the Ottawa National Forest in re-establishing the original routes of the 100+ year old Bentley Trail; Ms. Lenz stated she received a bit of information on this trail and looks forward to hearing more details. **Ms. Duncan** stated she has frequented this trail quite a bit and appreciates the mention of it.

Council Closing Comments

Chair Lorensen opened the floor for Council comments.

- **Mr. St. John** stated he feels some of the earlier discussions is a blatant misrepresentation of proposed regulations and stating deer are on the brink of disappearing is not true. He stated the regulations take to heart the complexities between the southern UP and the northern UP and he finds it ironic that those complaining about antlerless harvesting are not coming from people in the southern UP but rather the northern UP where there still will not be any antlerless harvest. He encouraged everyone to review the regulations and to study the map before making any conclusions.
- **Mr. Schulz** stated this meeting shows how cooperative the DNR staff are with all different issues, whether there is agreement or disagreement. He feels the DNR truly listens to the Council's concerns.
- **Chair Lorensen** thanked NRC Chair Rose and Commissioners for attending and the DNR staff from Lansing for attending and listening to comments, ideas, and opinions. He also thanked all the Council members, stating if it were not for them and their willingness to share their thoughts, ideas and opinions, there would not be a viable group. He thanked the public participants for listening in and commenting as well.
- **Mr. Hall** stated in light of what happened in Washington, DC yesterday, we all work hard to be good to each other, to work together and to do the best we can to make this country a better place. He encouraged everyone to focus on the positives and work together and thanked everyone for participating this evening. **Chair Lorensen** concurred.

Adjournment

Chair Lorensen thanked everyone who participated and for their contributions. He adjourned the meeting at 8:48pm Eastern.

Approved 3/18/21