

Western Upper Peninsula Citizen Advisory Council (WUPCAC)

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, July 22, 2020

5:30-8:00pm Central / 6:30-9:00pm 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

Jake Putala

Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Staff & Guests

Dave Nyberg, Natural Resources Commissioner, Marquette
Kristi Dahlstrom, Executive Division, Marquette
Monica Joseph, Wildlife Division, Crystal Falls
Stacy Haughey, UP Field Deputy, Executive Division, Marquette
George Madison, Fisheries Division, Baraga
Lt. Ryan Aho, Law Enforcement Division, Crystal Falls
Joe Frieberg, Parks & Recreation Division, Baraga
Bill Scullon, Wildlife Division, Norway
Tom Seablom, Forest Resources Division, Marquette
Ron Yesney, Parks & Recreation Division-UP Trails, Marquette
Jay Wesley, Fisheries Division, Plainwell

Call to Order

Ms. Haughey welcomed everyone (51 total) to another WUPCAC meeting held virtually. She explained a few virtual housekeeping tips for the meeting and indicated Council members and registered members of the public were emailed copies of the agenda/presentation, division reports, and any other meeting handouts prior to the meeting.

Ms. Haughey provided an overview of the Upper Peninsula Citizens' Advisory Councils (East and West). She displayed a listing of current West Council members and the group/interest and UP county they represent. She also displayed a few photos of Council members "at work" in a variety of natural resource settings.

Ms. Haughey displayed a long listing of registered public attendees on the screen and welcomed them to the meeting. She also welcomed NRC Commissioners Dave Nyberg and JR Richardson, who may attend later, and recognized Mr. George LaBlonde from Sen. Peter's office and Mr. Rich Rosway from Rep. Markkanen's office.

Vice Chair Suchovsky, on behalf of Chair Lorenson who will be arriving later on, called the meeting to order at 5:40pm. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Adoption of Agenda

Vice Chair Suchovsky asked the Council if there were any additions or revisions to the agenda. None were brought forth. **Mr. Lindquist motioned to accept the agenda as presented; Mr. Schulz supported the motion. Ayes: All. Nays: None. Absent: See attendance on page 1. No further discussion. Motion carried.**

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

Vice Chair Suchovsky asked if there were any changes to the May 20, 2020 WUPCAC meeting minutes that were distributed to the Council via email for review. None were brought forth. **Mr. Solka motioned to accept the minutes as submitted; Dr. Schott supported the motion. Ayes: All. Nays: None. Absent: See attendance on page 1. No further discussion. Motion carried.**

DNR Reports from Division Staff

Written staff reports were provided to Council members on July 15, 2020. The following verbal updates were provided.

- **Stacy Haughey, UP Field Deputy:** Ms. Haughey pointed out there were three items added to the division reports on page 7 as a follow-up to questions asked at the May meeting. They included: DMU estimates, number of antlerless permits for the UP by county, and license revenue comparison. She indicated she did not have anything further to add to her report.
- **George Madison, Fisheries Division:** Mr. Madison stated he did not have anything to add to his report. He introduced Mr. Jay Wesley, Northern Lake Michigan unit coordinator. Mr. Wesley introduced himself. Mr. Holmes stated he was looking at a graph earlier which indicated the appropriation of funding sources for the Fisheries Division and it included donor groups with names and amounts. He stated he would like to receive the donors/groups names and amounts and if the payment is given directly to the division or if it pays for other services. Mr. Madison stated there has been a number of donations to the Grayling Restoration Program. Mr. Wesley indicated he will look into it and get back with Mr. Holmes. Mr. Dropps stated he would like an update on the statewide inland water management plan. Mr. Wesley will check on the status and report back to Mr. Dropps. Later in the meeting, Mr. Wesley stated the statewide inland water management plan is still within the Fisheries Division and once complete it will be sent to the Warmwater Steering Committee and feels it will be some time yet before it goes public.
- **Tom Seablom, Forest Resources Division:** Mr. Seablom added the forestry action plan is in the final stages of edits. A draft was sent out on August 3 for public review via a press release and was also sent out to stakeholders who were involved in the meetings. The plan will be posted on the website for 60 days and comments are due by October 2. Issues raised during the workshops were turned into objectives and are included in the draft plan. Mr. Schulz thanked Mr. Seablom for his participation in the WUPCAC's forestry subcommittee meeting held recently citing his contributions to the discussion helped immensely.
- **Lt. Ryan Aho, Law Enforcement Division:** Lt. Aho indicated recreational activity in the woods and on the water has increased immensely the last few months in light of the pandemic which has increased activity in all arenas. As a result, officers have been very busy with an increase in illegal activity, including baiting, marine activity, and emergency responses/rescues. Mr. Schulz asked for clarification if ORVs should be riding on the blacktop or on the shoulder, when allowed to. Lt. Aho stated it may be different in some areas, but the general rule is to travel as far to the right hand portion of the roadway/county road (generally not on the blacktop) as you can safely travel not going at a greater speed of 25 miles per hour.
- **Joe Frieberg, Parks & Recreation Division:** Mr. Frieberg indicated he was attending on behalf of Mr. Doug Rich. He reported state parks have been very busy since opening up the later part of June and they expect it to continue for the remainder of the season.

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- **Monica Joseph, Wildlife Division:** Ms. Joseph stated staff are gradually being able to do more activities and habitat work in the field. She indicated plans to handle sealing and registering of animals are still being developed. Mr. Lindquist asked about the annual statewide deer survey that is done each year. Mr. Scullon indicated he is referring to the harvest survey and although staff are still working on it, the results have been delayed. Mr. Lindquist also asked about the results of an online survey sent out regarding thoughts on deer regulations. Mr. Scullon stated he is referring to an opinion survey through MSU and he has not received the results yet. NRC Commissioner Nyberg indicated some of the responses to the opinion survey were incorporated into the public comment section at the NRC June meeting, but no official results have been available yet. Mr. Holmes mentioned he was happy to see the antler point restrictions removed from DMU 122. Ms. Joseph stated she believes the restrictions were removed to simplify the CWD core management area in that location.
 - **Ron Yesney, Parks & Recreation Division-UP Trails:** Mr. Yesney indicated trail usage during the pandemic has also been high similar to state park usage; they are seeing record numbers on trail counts. He stated work has begun on the new Chassell grade, which received a lot of damage during the Father's Day storm in 2018, including brushing and ditch cleaning. A full year of construction was planned this year but has been held up by the coronavirus. He noted the Parks and Recreation Division chief is working on responses to the Council's resolutions from the last meeting regarding snowmobile noise and the reimbursement formula for snowmobile clubs and the Council should be receiving them soon.

Public Comment on Agenda Items Only

Vice Chair Suchovsky indicated there were no public comment requests pertaining to agenda items received.

Old Business

1. Proposed Marquette County Shooting Range Update: Ms. Haughey indicated this, along with the CWD Update, are standing agenda topics. She noted she spoke with Ms. Lori Burford, DNR shooting range specialist, last week who indicated the lease agreement negotiation is almost complete. As soon as the agreement is signed, Ms. Haughey stated she will let the Council know.
2. CWD Update: Ms. Haughey stated she has been fielding several questions regarding testing for this year and given the current situation with the budget, the social distance restrictions and the hiring and spending freeze, the 2020 season will look and feel different. There will be a reduction in resources as a result. It is anticipated that testing levels will not be at the same amount they were in the past. Michigan had tested more animals than any other state in the United States and Michigan's tests results account for one fourth of all CWD tests in the US. She stated conversations will continue and she will keep the Council apprised of all the details as she receives them.
3. UP Habitat Workgroup Update: Mr. Scullon reported the workgroup has not met since the stay at home order began in March. The workgroup still exists; however, he is unsure when they will proceed. He stated all major activities have been paused, including deer habitat grants. With the spending freeze, the grants are not moving forward and are paused. Mr. Lindquist indicated he spoke with Mr. Jim Hammill, chair of the workgroup, and he stated the workgroup is on hold at the moment. He stated the workgroup has done some very good things and explained what has been done to date and what more is expected. Funding is still being sought for the program. Discussion ensued regarding deer winter complexes and forest and wildlife management planning. Mr. Suchovsky spoke about hemlock woolly adelgid research.

New Business

1. **Keweenaw Point Advisory Committee Recommendations Overview (from 2004):** **Mr. Yesney** stated he was asked by the Council at the last meeting to provide a history of this project. He stated land at Keweenaw Point was purchased by the state back in 2003 and an ad hoc citizens advisory committee was put together to develop recommendations for use and management of the property. He noted WUPCAC Vice Chair Suchovsky was on this committee, which met for a year. He reviewed four maps (on powerpoint) showing the area of land that was included in the acquisition, which areas were recommended for motorized camping, rustic camping and hiking, recommendations for motorized trails and non-motorized trails, and proposed parking lots and roads. For camping facilities, several recommendations were implemented, and several were not, as the Forest Resources Division did not have the manpower to manage additional campsites at that time nor were there enough staff at Fort Wilkins to manage it. Dispersed camping does occur there now. He explained the non-motorized trail plan, stating most of the recommendations made by the advisory committee have been put in place partly through trust fund and RTP monies. He went on to explain the motorized trail recommendations, which included a small loop that was already in place, indicating a large percentage of what was recommended has been implemented. For the parking lot and road recommendations, he stated several roads were designated and signed to help people navigate. He noted written recommendations for each of the subgroups are available if the Council is interested. **Mr. Schmidt** asked if there was a statewide trail permit for this area. **Mr. Yesney** stated local non-motorized clubs may institute trail fees for use on their trails, but there is no statewide permit. **Mr. Lindquist** asked if there are any thoughts on reconvening the advisory group and continue on with the recommendations. **Mr. Yesney** replied the group did reconvene in 2016 to review the recommendations and the group seemed satisfied at that time. He stated if there is an interest, he didn't see an issue with the group meeting again. **Mr. Seablom** asked if the initial recommendations from years ago continue to be a blueprint for development going forward. **Mr. Yesney** replied he believes so, stating they have utilized the recommendations several times when funding presents itself, paying particular attention to areas that are to be kept remote, for example. He indicated this was just a brief synopsis of all the work over the span of those years. **Vice Chair Suchovsky** added some discussion about a water trail as well. **Mr. Moran** spoke about the need for clearing of trails in that area due to storm damage, etc. and asked if there are monies for maintenance. **Mr. Yesney** indicated the area of trail Mr. Moran mentioned is maintained by the Keweenaw ATV club. **Mr. Moran** commended the work done in that area as it is truly a beautiful area to see and recreate in. Discussion ensued.

Ms. Duncan asked if she is able to park (not camp) a horse trailer at Van Riper State Park while she does some horse-riding exploration in that area. **Mr. Frieberg** suggested she speak to Ms. Deb Gill, unit manager of the park, for a definitive answer. **Ms. Duncan** stated she heard from Ms. Gill regarding the proposed equestrian campground at Van Riper indicating with the coronavirus, all projects are on hold, but she would just like to stop and ride for a few hours. **Mr. Frieberg** stated he will follow-up with Ms. Gill to contact Ms. Duncan.

Chair Lorensen arrived to the meeting and thanked Vice Chair Suchovsky for running the meeting up to this point. **Chair Lorensen** asked Ms. Haughey to provide the next update.

2. **2020 UP Deer Regulations Update:** **Ms. Haughey** noted that several comments were received about the deer regulations after the Council meeting press release was issued, which was a few days after the Natural Resource Commission (NRC) had met and made their decisions, and feels that there may have been some confusion about the role of the Council versus the NRC. She clarified the Council has an advisory role to the DNR, whereas the NRC has the authority to make regulation changes. She shared on screen and reviewed the most recent statewide deer regulation changes the NRC made at their July 16th meeting, which she also

emailed to the Council earlier in the week. She then shared on screen and reviewed the changes made to UP deer regulations for 2020. The hunter's digest will be published in August and will have all the updated DMU maps and changes listed. She asked Mr. Scullon, Ms. Joseph, and Commissioner Nyberg if they had any additional information to share. **Mr. Scullon** stated staff are working through the complicated process to determine the snowfall analysis that was included in the changes. **Commissioner Nyberg** explained the process and reasoning behind the NRC's decision making with antlerless harvest, and although the DNR's recommendation was conservative, he and Commissioner Richardson were looking into the concern of a one-size fits all approach and wanted to establish an increase in antlerless harvest in the UP where it makes sense, but exempt high snowfall zone areas and determine the preferred metric for those areas. He also spoke to the question about DMU 122 earlier in the meeting, citing the decision and objective to remove antler point restrictions was focused more on the science of CWD containment and not due to any action against APRs in that area. **Mr. Holmes** explained his reasoning behind his earlier comment. **Commissioner Nyberg** spoke about a study on the impact of APRs on CWD. He stated overall, he wanted to address the thoughts behind the complicated regulation changes, and he wanted the Council to hear it from the UP Commissioners. **Mr. St. John** asked if use of high snowfall zone area data was suggested by the DNR or was it something added by the NRC. **Commissioner Nyberg** replied it was not suggested by the DNR and it was his amendment. He further explained the thought process behind it. A lengthy discussion ensued between **Mr. St. John, Mr. Scullon, Commissioner Nyberg and Mr. Baker** regarding deer density surveys and impact on forest regeneration and vegetation, researching snowfall assessment data by DMU, equity and distribution of crop damage permits and a study on population dynamics for deer. **Ms. Haughey** also displayed on screen the deer regulations passed by the NRC for the lower peninsula.

3. NRC Membership: **Ms. Haughey** announced, pending a Senate hearing, three new natural resource commissioners were appointed: JR Richardson (Ontonagon), Carole Rose (Hillman) and Michael Lashbrook (East Lansing). All were able to attend the July meeting. Commissioner Richardson who was reappointed joins Commissioner Nyberg in representing the UP. A brief bio of each was shown on screen.
4. COVID-19 Impact Update: **Ms. Haughey** stated the DNR has been impacted greatly by the coronavirus. The DNR developed a phased approach for staff transitioning back to the office and it changes daily. There are some staff who have been able to go back to their full function due to the nature of their job and some have been able to get out into the field. Those who mainly worked in the offices are continuing to do their full workload remotely until further notice. Rotating layoff days were initiated for 10 weeks and will end July 25. There will be no further layoffs this fiscal year, which ends September 30. She noted the state will have a significant shortfall for the next fiscal year, starting October 1, and it is not known what cuts will be forthcoming. Although the DNR does not know what the next fiscal year will look like, staff will do their best to serve the public as they always do. During the pandemic, the DNR also had a spending and hiring freeze which is still active. Several projects are on pause until the budget can be balanced. She mentioned there is a section on the DNR's website specific to COVID and encouraged everyone to use it to keep updated on the latest information. **Mr. Suchovsky** asked how the spending restrictions affect staff who need to get out in the field and their ability to drive to sites and obtain gasoline and supplies. **Ms. Haughey** replied staff who have been able to do field work are doing it alone and with no coworkers in a vehicle. She indicated most of the projects requiring significant dollars and multiple staff are on pause. She stated she will keep the Council informed as information comes forth. **Mr. Frieberg** added the opening of state parks were delayed until later June and with the recreation passport not being required for a few months, the Parks and Recreation Division is looking at a shortfall of \$9 million in state parks and \$3.5 million in waterways funding. He stated state parks are staffed and funded at a level just to maintain cleaning and lawn services plus any health and safety issues which are

priority. **Mr. Schmidt** asked if the legislature could take monies from the DNRs budget or does the funding generated at state parks for example stay put. **Ms. Haughey** explained the recent budget announcement and stated ultimately it depends on the funding source and what flexibility there might be in the use of them. The DNR did see a \$2.4 million general fund reduction this fiscal year through September 30th which is about 5% of the DNR's current budget and next fiscal year starting October 1st could see similar cuts. Discussion continued. She stated the increase in people recreating and buying licenses is good to see, but it will be the cuts in the general fund that will dictate what next fiscal year will look like. **Vice Chair Suchosvky** asked if the license fee revenue can be moved around or is it restricted. **Ms. Haughey** further explained the 85 different funds within the DNR and the work staff have done to determine if there is any flexibility. **Mr. Wesley** spoke about Fisheries Division revenue going into the Game and Fish Protection Fund which also can help other areas and added they are being asked to preserve as much as they can.

Reports from Committee Meetings Held

Vice Chair Suchovsky opened the floor for Committee reports (*Chair Lorensen was having internet difficulties*).

1. **Fisheries:** **Mr. Dropps** indicated the committee has not met because of COVID. He noted the status of the commercial fishing bills in the legislature and that he will update the Council and committee as more information becomes available.
2. **Forestry:** **Mr. St. John** reported the committee met last week and discussed the potential to increase school forest programs. Several ideas were presented, and the committee will try to bring some to fruition with the help of the DNR. **Mr. Schulz** commended Mr. St. John for chairing the meeting and appreciated everyone's time in attending the meeting. He said he started the meeting with a negative attitude but came away very positive. **Mr. Seablom** stated he looked into the existing school forest programs in the UP and some chose to sell their forest land. **Mr. Schulz** indicated he inquired with the community college as well and will pass that information along once he receives it. **Mr. Lindquist** indicated school forests are a long-term project and he appreciates what the committee is trying to do and hopes they can make it happen. Discussion ensued regarding the history of school forest programs.
3. **Trails/Recreation/Law:** **Mr. Lorensen** reported the resolutions from the last meeting regarding snowmobile noise and the reimbursement formula were sent to the Director and a response is being developed and will be sent back to the Council soon.
4. **Wildlife:** **Mr. Lindquist** reported the committee met and discussed the resolution being presented to the Council today (which was emailed to the Council a week ago) regarding the online elk hunt orientation submitted by Dr. Travis Smith as well as the deer regulations being proposed. He explained the reasoning behind the resolution stating that online auctions could be available for other hunts, such as waterfowl and sturgeon spearing. He stated because this was a topic on the July NRC meeting being held before the Council meeting, Stacy was able to at least share the idea with the Commissioners beforehand. **Ms. Haughey** stated normally this is not the procedure, but because it was already on the NRC's July 16th agenda and being voted on, she took the liberty before a Council vote to share it since and made it clear that it had not been to the full Council yet. **Chair Lorensen** asked the Council for action. **Dr. Schott motioned to approve the resolution to recommend an online elk hunt orientation as presented; Mr. Schulz supported the motion. Ayes: All. Nays: None. Absent: See attendance on page 1. No further discussion. Motion carried.**

Next Meeting

1. **Next Meeting Date:** **Chair Lorensen** noted the next meeting will be Thursday, September 17th tentatively in Ironwood, however, the location may change to a Zoom meeting if needed.
2. **Items for Next WUPCAC Meeting Agenda:** **Chair Lorensen** indicated suggestions for the next agenda can be sent to him, Ms. Haughey or Ms. Dahlstrom. Those submitted will be discussed at the next pre-meeting. **Vice Chair Suchovsky** suggested having Mr. Mike Smalligan bring the Council up to speed on the school forest program since there was a good discussion on it, citing it may be of interest to the Council and the public how education could be enhanced by making use of our natural resources. **Mr. Schmidt** asked if September would be a good time for a CWD testing update. **Mr. Scullon** indicated plans for the fall for staffing, check stations and testing are being worked on now and should be available by then.

Public Comments

Chair Lorensen opened the floor for public comment:

1. *Sandy Schulz, Ontonagon-Licenses at retail outlets, state park day pass cost (pre-registered):* Ms. Schulz stated she wanted to let the DNR know that the new license system is very confusing, takes longer to wait on customers because so much information has to be typed in now, and the ability to sell the wrong licenses seems greater. She also mentioned it cost her \$17 to visit a friend at a state park for a few hours and thought it was very expensive for a day pass. **Ms. Haughey** stated she will connect with Ms. Schulz and relay her information to the licensing team to see if they can provide some assistance. **Mr. Frieberg** indicated there is no daily state park pass for Michigan residents. If people purchase their recreation passport when renewing their license plates at the Michigan Secretary of State, the fee is \$12 and it is good for the entire year, not just for a day. If one is purchased at a state park, there is a \$5 fee in addition, totaling \$17. A daily pass for Wisconsin residents at a state park is \$9 and is only good for that day. Ms. Schulz stated she appreciated the clarification and thanked Mr. Frieberg.
2. *Donald Severa, Houghton-Partridge hunting forecast:* Mr. Severa asked if there is a forecast for partridge hunting this year in terms of population count. **Ms. Joseph** responded stating there was no spring drumming count this year due to COVID, however, from what she's heard today, people are seeing birds of all sizes. She noted staff see the majority of the anecdotal groups in August, so it's a bit early to know. She feels optimistic this year could be the peak, but there is nothing scientific to know at this point due to limited field time.
3. *Bruce Reniger, Bergland-Mask policy at state parks:* Mr. Reniger thanked the Council for the opportunity to speak. He received a response to his concerns by Mr. Frieberg prior to the meeting and he appreciates the input he received from several DNR staff. He stated it appears that some of the mask policy failures that he had seen was not actually part of the DNR but rather were third party operators at facilities located within the parks. **Chair Lorensen** thanked him for taking the time to be with the Council this evening.
4. *Dr. Lauren Jescovitch, Houghton-Michigan Sea Grant:* Dr. Jescovitch introduced herself, stating she started with the Michigan Sea Grant last October and is located at the MSU Extension Office in Hancock and has an office at MTU's Great Lakes Research Center. Her background is in fisheries and water quality, and she is happy to assist as a resource in any way she can. She will provide her contact information to anyone who would like it.

Council Closing Comments

Chair Lorensen opened the floor for Council comments:

1. **Mr. Schulz** commended Mr. Yesney for the alpha signing project. He stated if it weren't for Mr. Yesney's support over the years about this request, it wouldn't have gone anywhere. The signs are ready to be installed. He thanked DNR staff in general for all the support.

2. **Mr. Hall** asked for a clarification in the regulations regarding all legal firearms able to be used during muzzleloader season. **Mr. Lindquist** stated it is referring to zone 3, which is in the southern lower peninsula and explained what can be used in that area during muzzleloader season.
3. **Mr. Hall** commended Ms. Haughey and Ms. Burford for all the time they put in over the years towards the proposed Marquette County shooting range. He asked if the current COVID situation will hamper construction once the lease is signed. **Ms. Haughey** stated she has been told the funding, which is from very specific grants, is secured. However, the timeline for construction could be impacted as work may not be able to be performed in the same way prior to the coronavirus.
4. **Mr. Moran** spoke about the waterfowl lottery system and being present for draws. He recommended the Wildlife Division keep this in mind when determining new systems. **Mr. Scullon** stated they have been planning something similar to the online elk hunt orientation and considering how to conduct those effectively in this new environment.

Adjournment

Chair Lorensen thanked everyone who participated and for their contributions. The meeting adjourned at 9:08pm Eastern.

Approved 9/17/20