

Western Upper Peninsula Citizen Advisory Council (WUPCAC)
Meeting Minutes-APPROVED 5/17/22
Tuesday, March 22, 2022
5:00-7:30pm Central / 6:00-8:30pm Eastern
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Council Members Present

Jim Baker	Mike Holmes	Horst Schmidt
Erik Bessonon	Dave Johnson	Kirk Schott
Olivia Castles	George Lindquist	Skip Schulz
Floyd Dropps	Jim Lorenson-Chairman	Carol Mason Sherrill
Barb Gajewski	Chauncey Moran	Travis Smith
Dave Hall	Mary Peterson	Tom Solka

Council Members Absent/Excused

Joan Duncan
Warren Suchovsky-Vice Chairman

Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Staff & Guests

Carol Moncrieff Rose, Natural Resources Commission Chair
Sgt. Marc Pomroy, Law Enforcement Division, Baraga
Kristi Dahlstrom, Executive Division, Marquette
John DePue, Wildlife Division, Baraga
Dan Dowdy, Parks & Recreation Division, Baraga
Lori Green, Parks & Recreation Division, Roscommon
Patrick Hanchin, Fisheries Division, Marquette
Stacy Haughey, UP Field Deputy, Executive Division, Marquette
Nicole Hunt, Parks & Recreation Division, Lansing
Mike Knack, Parks & Recreation Division, Ontonagon
George Madison, Fisheries Division, Baraga
Doug Rich, Parks & Recreation Division, Baraga
Tom Seablom, Forest Resources Division, Marquette
Gina Penegor, Parks & Recreation Division, Ontonagon
David Price, Forest Resources Division, Lansing
Jay Wesley, Fisheries Division, Plainwell
Ron Yesney, UP Trails-Parks & Recreation Division, Marquette

Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance/Roll Call

At 6:00pm Eastern, **Ms. Haughey**, DNR UP Field Deputy, began the meeting, which was changed to an all-virtual meeting the day before due to a severe ice and snow storm the western UP was experiencing and several Council members not being able to attend in person. She introduced herself and welcomed everyone, including NRC Chair Carol Moncrieff Rose, legislative representatives, media, and other guests who registered and were listed on screen. She indicated the meeting will be guided with a powerpoint presentation and reviewed virtual meeting tips. She briefly explained the 14-year history of the Upper Peninsula Citizens' Advisory Councils (East and West) which are advisory groups to the DNR. She mentioned there are two opportunities for public comment, one focused on agenda items and the other for general public comments.

Chair Jim Lorenson officially called the meeting to order and welcomed Council members, DNR staff, NRC Chair Rose, and guests to the meeting. He led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chair Lorenson asked for roll call. Ms. Dahlstrom read the names of all those attending virtually. A list of Council members was also displayed on screen.

Adoption of Agenda

Chair Lorenson suggested combining the second public comment portion of the meeting with the beginning comment section due to 45 minutes of comments currently requested to better determine the amount of meeting time remaining afterwards. He also suggested deferring the Deer Camp Survey presentation to the next meeting due to time constraints. He asked the Council if there were any further additions or revisions to the agenda; none were brought forth. **Mr. Solka motioned to accept the revised agenda as proposed by Chair Lorenson; Mr. Lindquist supported the motion. Ayes: All. Nays: None. Absent: See page 1. No further discussion. Motion carried.**

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

Chair Lorenson noted there was a suggested revision for the January 20, 2022, meeting minutes (previously distributed to the Council via email for review) under the last public comment section (shown on screen) which was requested today by Mr. Frank Pearson who made the comments. He read the revision aloud as requested by Mr. Pearson. **Chair Lorenson** asked if there were any further changes to the minutes which were distributed to the Council via email for review. **Mr. Hall motioned to accept the minutes as corrected; Mr. Schulz supported the motion. Ayes: All. Nays: None. Absent: See page 1. No further discussion. Motion carried.**

DNR Reports from Division Staff

Written staff reports were provided to Council members on March 15, 2022. The following brief updates were added. **Chair Lorenson** asked staff to keep updates brief due to time constraints and for Council members to email any additional questions to Ms. Dahlstrom for a response after the meeting.

1. *Mr. George Madison, Fisheries Division:*

- A busy fishing season is expected for staff; fishing season will start in a couple of weeks and several publications are coming out.
- Jay Wesley, Lake Michigan Basin Coordinator, and Patrick Hanchin, Lake Superior Basin Coordinator, are both attending the meeting this evening.
- **Mr. Dropps** noted Mr. Darren Kramer from the Escanaba office indicated whitefish have started spawning in the Menominee River and protection of them will be on the agenda at one of the Coffee & Conversation Meetings coming up. He added this is a unique situation and encouraged those interested to attend the meetings or contact Mr. Kramer. **Mr. Madison** stated several Coffee and Conversation meetings will be held in person or virtually; details are included the Fisheries website.

2. *Mr. Tom Seablom, Forest Resources Division:*

- 3 tractors and six staff are deployed in Texas helping with wildfires. Their term was extended to April 1, and they will be back to work locally by April 7, which is about the start of the state's normal spring fire season.
- **Mr. Schulz** asked if there is a potential problem with emerald ash borer in Ontonagon County. **Mr. Seablom** indicated it is more of a matter of time before it naturally spreads to all areas. It is being monitored and quarantine guidelines are constantly changing as a result.

3. *Sgt. Marc Pomroy, Law Enforcement Division:*

- No additional items to the written report.

4. **Mr. John DePue, Wildlife Division:**

- Spring grouse drumming count surveys will begin again this spring.
- Bat surveys are currently being conducted and an encouraging number of bats have been seen at several sites.
- Snow melt has been slow across the U.P. making spring food scarce for deer. It will be interesting to see how the lasting winter season has impacted the deer herd.
- **Mr. Schulz** asked if the avian influenza affects geese. **Mr. DePue** stated it affects all waterfowl, passerines, and all birds. It has been detected in Michigan, not in wild birds, but rather in commercial or semi-commercial broods. It is a highly pathogenic strain that is spreading through the Dakotas, Missouri, and Iowa. The DNR is monitoring the situation.
- **Ms. Mason Sherrill** asked what bat species were seen during the surveys. **Mr. DePue** stated they encountered little brown bats, the threatened northern long-eared bats, and big brown bats. Occasionally they will see the tri-colored bats but haven't seen these for a few years. Work continues with different research universities in trying to mitigate the impact of white nose syndrome in bats.
- **Mr. Johnson** asked about the status of the wolf count survey. **Mr. DePue** stated the survey is still ongoing and will be another month before efforts wrap up and numbers analyzed. He indicated it may be May or early June when results would be available.

5. **Mr. Ron Yesney, Parks & Recreation Division-UP Trails:**

- Staff have been very busy with infrastructure planning going into next year, including several bridge projects. Several non-motorized pathways will be modified and extended this summer and fall.
- Very busy snowmobile season. Low levels of snow in lower Michigan brought riders to the UP. Western UP trails were very busy, and the economic impact was great in those areas.
- An offer has been made for the Eastern UP trails specialist position and it is hopeful the new person will start soon.
- **Mr. Schmidt** asked if contracts for the Lake Linden Hancock trail will be awarded this year. **Mr. Yesney** stated they are working with federal funding requirements and reviews as fast as they can, and as soon as it is done, they can bid out the project, which will be later than they had hoped. He also noted engineering determined several culverts needed to be extended in order to get the correct drainage which requires construction easements from private landowners, and they are working on those this week.
- **Mr. Hall** asked what laws or regulations exist regarding the speed of snowmobiles on trails. **Mr. Yesney** indicated there are two areas that have a land use order restricting speed. Otherwise, the law reads the operator of the snowmobile has to be operating at a safe and prudent speed; there is no specific speed noted in the law. **Mr. Hall** noted that speed seems to be the contributing factor to most snowmobile fatalities. **Mr. Yesney** indicted speed is a major factor. Wisconsin did attempt a speed limit, but due to difficulty in enforcing, it was eventually eliminated.

6. **Mr. Doug Rich, Parks & Recreation Division:**

- A gift of 1,235 acres from the UP Land Conservancy (UPLC) will be made with approval at the NRC's next meeting to Craig Lake State Park in Michigamme Township, Marquette County. It will bring three natural reserves into Craig Lake management which includes 90% of the watershed from Indian Lake as well as the headwaters of the Peshekee River and will be protected into perpetuity. It also comes with 10 miles of hiking trails and access to the Keewaydin Lake boating access site. Craig Lake State Park has been exposed to the popularity of state parks recently and has encountered impact damage to its natural and cultural resources from dispersed camping, garbage, etc. As a result, all park campsites will be brought into the reservation system in 2023, with 2022 being an educational year.

- **Mr. Solka** asked if the gifted lands lie to the east/southeast of the present Craig Lake boundaries and if one could hike from Keewaydin Lake to Craig Lake. **Mr. Rich** confirmed the location and indicated 10 miles of hiking trails had already been established by UPLC. He added part of the land deal includes a conservation easement protecting all but 160 acres from development.
- **Mr. Lindquist** referred to a large-scale trust fund trails project at Little Presque Isle (LPI) listed in the division reports under Parks & Recreation. He stated there has been a long history of which division is in charge of LPI and there was an agreement years ago which indicated deer wintering complexes would override other recreational demands for that area. He is concerned with the amount and expansion of trail work occurring at LPI when that acreage was purchased with fish and game funds or Pittman-Robertson funds specifically to manage for wildlife. **Mr. Seablom** clarified that LPI was acquired through a land exchange with CCI, Inc and Pittman-Robertson funds were used to allocate the property that is east of County Road 550. Along the lakeshore and the rest is tax-reverted land. There is no expansion of trails. The project is an upgrade of already existing trails and boardwalk, especially with the newly acquired property around the Wetmore Pond area from a land exchange. **Mr. Rich** added car counters for LPI reached 1.2 million cars (the Porkies doesn't reach that amount); the dollars are being invested to protect the resource damage from high use. Discussion ensued regarding recreational use (walking, hunting, snowshoeing, biking) between **Mr. Lindquist, Mr. Seablom** and **Mr. Rich**. **Ms. Haughey** suggested further discussion be deferred as an agenda item for the next meeting in an effort of time; **Chair Lorenson** agreed. **Mr. Johnson** added he would like to know how this land is treated differently from those that aren't game purchase lands.

7. **Ms. Stacy Haughey, UP Field Deputy:**

- Houghton-Douglass Falls Project Update: In January 2022, the Natural Resources Trust Fund awarded \$300,000 towards the project's next phase of development. Based on the overall estimate of the project once designed of \$600,000, additional funding from the park improvement/endowment capital outlay funds may be needed. If all goes well with the processes, construction may begin late fall 2023 or spring of 2024. The area is currently in state ownership, but it is not open to the public for safety reasons. Updates will continue to be provided to the Council.
- Overview of State of Michigan's Park Concession Process: Information on the process was provided as a background before public comment on the topic. **Ms. Haughey** has spoken to the DNR Director, Deputy Director, Chief and Assistant Chief of Parks & Recreation Division, as well as local legislators and legislative liaisons. It is important locally, regionally and on a state level as well. The following slides were presented:
 - *Who Can Apply? Where is the Information?* [MI State Park Concessions Listing](#). This listing on the DNR website shows what types of contracts are located at various MI state parks and when their current contract expires, whether bids are currently being sought or if no bids were received.
 - *Detailed Concession Information:* [MI State Park Concession Process](#). This link on the DNR website has information on the application process.
 - *Why Do We Have Them?* To enrich visitor experience by partnering with local small businesses and outside organizations. Examples of concessions include park stores (souvenirs, kayak/bike/other rentals), food concessions, ORV rentals, water playgrounds, downhill ski operations, brew pub at Tahquamenon Falls State Park (*clarification: this establishment is not on state land*), Michigan History Center gift shops (*clarification: these are not bid out by the Parks & Recreation Division; they are under the Marketing and Outreach Division*).
 - *Statutory Authority:* The DNR is tasked with overseeing these contracts through statutory authority and the process is not taken lightly as its very intricate. It is not one person who makes the decision on a contract in the DNR but rather multiple layers of people. In addition to statutory authority, the DNR is audited regularly by the Office of Auditor General to make sure the decisions are in compliance with requirements

and policies. The concessions contract at the Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park followed this same process.

- *Concession Examples in Michigan:* Water parks in three state parks, vendor-purchased lodging added to five parks, contract awarded to vendor (Simple Adventures) in 2021 at Interlocken State Park who has invested \$7,500 in upgrades and increased revenue 45%. This same vendor was also awarded a contract at Fort Custer Recreation Area in 2021 and invested \$3,500 in upgrades and increased revenue 20%.
- *Concession Facts:* There are 76 concession contracts currently in place in the state. 95% of concession contracts are with Michigan-owned businesses. Revenue from concessions, leases and operating agreements totaled over \$2 million in FY 2021 and were re-invested into the state park system.
- *Competitive Bid Process:* 1) Bid documents are prepared for the service the DNR is seeking to provide; 2) advertised, including a pre-bid meeting (*clarification: which are optional*); 3) hold bid opening at advertised time; 4) bid evaluation by panel, independently scored (multiple layers of people, not a single person making the decision); 5) contract awarded. **Ms. Haughey** indicated after receiving feedback on the Porkies situation, she reviewed both bids for the park's concession contract, and it is clear one bid offers more services than the other. The DNR is statutorily obligated to choose the bid that offers the best experience for visitors of the parks. They are hard decisions and made on behalf of all residents of the State of Michigan. The DNR does not take the process lightly and decisions are not made easily.
- *We Share a World Class Destination:* Timber sales in the Forest Resources Division, construction of a trail project, or a new furnace in one of the state offices—similar bid processes take place throughout the DNR, and contracts are awarded based on similar processes. The contract for the new concessionaire at the Porkies has been signed. It is a legal document and the DNR stands by the team's thorough decision. As the DNR's U.P. Field Deputy, **Ms. Haughey** stated she is disappointed this issue is dividing the community. Everyone, the DNR, the local community, and the state shares a world class destination at the Porkies. Together, everyone's actions moving forward will steer the future of the park.
- *Where Do We Go From Here?* The new concessionaire contract begins May 1 and everyone must work together to secure the park's future for this area and continue to build on its world class status. **Ms. Haughey** indicated she understands it is a big change and change can be difficult; however, the competitive bid process was followed as it is in all DNR bid processes. She stated she hopes everyone can move forward in a positive direction.
- **Mr. Schulz** stated the impact to the local community by not selecting the concessionaire, who has been providing services at the Porkies for over 30 years, has been a vital, integrated community member, knows the area and how to run the operations, will be devastating. He asked if the community's input was sought or considered in the selection process. **Ms. Haughey** stated it is taken into consideration; however, the competitive bid process was followed. A comparison of obtaining estimates for a new home furnace was given. **Mr. Schulz** added the former contractor supports the local community, local schools, clubs, organizations, etc. It's important to the Ontonagon community to support local folks to keep the community going. He added it's unfortunate to lose the bid to a lower peninsula company who is not local and was cheaper. **Ms. Haughey** noted it wasn't a case of an award to the lowest bidder in this case. It's a matter of who could provide the most services and enhanced experiences for visitors. New services may result in new and more visitors which could increase economic opportunity for the local area as well. **Mr. Schulz** asked who in the DNR takes part in the bid process. **Ms. Haughey** stated bids are independently scored by a team of staff which includes a statewide expert in purchasing, staff with legal expertise, and statewide parks and recreation staff. This same process is followed in all parks and recreation bids throughout the state, 76 of them.

Chair Lorenson thanked all the staff for participating and their willingness to take questions from the Council and moved on to public comments.

Public Comment on Agenda Items & Non-Agenda Items

Chair Lorenson noted all public comments have been moved to this section of the agenda as indicated previously. He indicated he will call on each person individually and they can provide comment for their allotted timeframe. He added this time is intended for members of the audience to provide comment, advice, or opinions to be heard by the Council; it is not a question-and-answer period. If there are questions, it may be necessary for staff to provide a response after the meeting.

1. *(5 min) Frank Pearson, Bay de Noc Great Lakes Sports Fishermen (Genetics & Escanaba River Fish Kill):* Mr. Pearson stated it will be difficult for him to provide comment on the genetics agenda topic which hasn't been presented yet. **Chair Lorenson** indicated he would defer those comments until after the Genetics topic. Mr. Pearson agreed and took a minute to speak about the Escanaba River fish kill situation in August of 2020 resulting from a black liquor spill by the Verso paper plant. The Bay de Noc Great Lakes Sports Fishermen are funding \$30,000 in 2023 to assist in planting brown trout into the area and will continue this for three years. They are also working with the DNR to provide fish for that area as well.
2. *(5 min) Joan Hawley, Ontonagon (Porcupine Mountain Wilderness State Park Ski Hill & Concessions):* Ms. Hawley, representing PMT Silent Sports as president and who submitted a bid for winter and summer concessions at the Porkies, spoke about what she feels is a lack of transparency in the bid process, the DNR choosing to operate the ski hill with inexperienced and unqualified staff, Gogebic Community College's success in running the ski hill, changes to the evaluation of concession bids after bids were submitted, lack of consideration for a local non-profit group with 30 years of experience and success at the Porkies, unwilling to meet and discuss the issues, etc. She also noted the situation is so problematic that she and Geri Hawley were asked to testify in the House of Representatives Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development and Natural Resources.
 - **Chair Lorenson** indicated, in the interest of transparency on this issue, he was the former president of Gogebic Community College, having retired several years ago. He stated he has had no discussions with the college or anyone else regarding operations at the ski hill and has no prior knowledge of this issue.
 - **Ms. Haughey** added for reference, the DNR received a letter from Gogebic Community College stating they did not want to continue the ski hill operation contract when the term expired.
3. *(5 min) Meredith Strong, Ontonagon (Concerns with Proposed Changes Next Year at Porcupine Mountain Wilderness State Park):* Ms. Strong spoke about her long-time involvement with the Porkies, experience with changes throughout the years that have not been good for the local community or visitors, the DNR running the ski hill not being in the best interest of the community, choosing a concessionaire not from the local area who will most likely have a difficult time operating in the unique area of the western UP and not providing the services needed, concern for local businesses and continuity of service to the visitors of the area.
4. *(5 min) Geri Hawley, Ontonagon (Porkies Situation):* Ms. Hawley, representing PMT Silent Sports as vice president, questioned why the DNR would choose a downstate company over a local one to run the concessions of the parks in a very economically depressed area and why would the DNR want to run the ski hill again. She spoke of the current concessionaire having 30 years of success, experience with ski equipment rental and repair, investing a half a million dollars to improve the ski chalet, improvements increasing their revenue 25% on average in the last seven years, offering more per year to give back to the state than the bid that was selected, being socially and economically involved in the local community for decades, founding member of the Friends of the Porkies group, serving on local community boards, and stated the new company

selected has made no commitments or financial obligation to the local economically depressed area. She also spoke about the ski hill almost being closed when the DNR ran it last, the loss of thousands of dollars due to the DNR not following through with chair lift repairs which cancelled the fall color tours, and safety issues with unqualified staff running operations. She indicated Rep. Greg Markkanen and Sen. Ed McBroom are helping them with their cause due to the significant number of emails to their offices. She pleaded for the DNR to keep the local concessionaires.

5. *(5 min) John Hawley, Ontonagon (Porkies Situation):* Mr. Hawley asked if he could switch his comment time allotment with Mr. Meneguzzo. After a brief discussion with **Chair Lorenson**, it was agreed that Mr. Hawley and Mr. Meneguzzo can utilize the 8-minute total combined allotment time since they were in the same room together (virtually). Mr. Hawley spoke about his great grandfather being instrumental in the Porkies becoming a state park, his long-time recreational activities in the Porkies, and the lack of trail maintenance in the park by the DNR which may indicate they have trouble with maintenance in their core functions. He questioned how the DNR will maintain operations on a large scale and if certified and qualified people be hired.
6. *(3 min) Tony Meneguzzo, Ontonagon (Porkies Concessions):* Mr. Meneguzzo indicated he and his wife, Dina, have run the Porkies concessions for the last 32 years. He spoke about growing their income 25.9% over the last seven years; being notified they lost the bid because of the amenities the new company proposed; reviewing the bid evaluation criteria of experience, financial stability and percentage paid to the state; how they met all of the criteria more so than the company chosen, and of the additional amenities offered by the other company, they recently eliminated two of them due to safety issues such as bike trails not being groomed or maintained. He pleaded for any assistance they can be given to continue with their services.
7. *(3 min) Jim Waters, Ontonagon (Disposition of Porkies Ski Operation):* Mr. Waters stated he has been on the Porkies ski patrol for the last 22 years, is the ski patrol director and is a user of the park as a taxpayer. He spoke about the comings and goings of managers at the park in the past, the experience and success of the current manager, how in the past the DNR decided to bid out operations and concessions to better focus on its core mission. He asked for transparency on this decision as well as a fair hearing and asked repeatedly why the DNR would want to take on operations with no experience or skilled people.
8. *(3 min) Casey VerBerkmoes, Ontonagon (Regarding Tony & Dena Meneguzzo):* Not in attendance when called upon.
9. *(3 min) Jerry Blake, Ontonagon (Ups & Downs of the Porkies Ski Hill Over the Years):* Mr. Blake indicated he has skied at the Porkies since the 1967-68. He spoke about the ups and downs of the Porkies over the years, the last five years being very good years, and people who indicated they wouldn't come back but did because of the current manager who has done a great job, listens to people and has worked hard to make it better. He asked why change was is working good, why not choose a local non-profit group with an experienced manager and concessionaires who would invest earned money back into ski hill improvements. He stated the area does not need to lose local jobs.
10. *(3 min) Rene' Skrubellos, Iron Mountain (Groveland Mine Solar Array Project):* Mr. Skrubellos stated he has been working on getting answers to the mine solar project on how the acreage that was turned back over to the state years ago and deemed a wildlife area is now becoming a solar panel farm. **Ms. Haughey** asked if he spoke with Mr. Scott Whitcomb, who presented on this topic at the last meeting, about his questions. Mr. Skrubellos stated he did, and Mr. Whitcomb did not know the answer at that time. **Ms. Haughey** stated she

wasn't aware there were still unanswered questions after the last call and will work to get an answer to Mr. Skrumbellos.

11. (3 min) *Karen Berg, Ontonagon (Porkies Ski Hill & Concessions Management)*: Ms. Berg indicated she has been visiting the porkies for the last 52 years. She spoke about the history of the Porkies when it was first designated as a state park; the Friends group being entrusted by Chief Olson in 2006 to develop successful folk school programs including classes, artist in residence program and musical festival which have increased attendance at the park; the Friends group wanting to grow and fundraise to support the park's needs to help maintain trails and manage concessions, and the incompetence of a for-profit manager in the past that caused great losses and decline in the number of visitors. She stated they want to keep management local and would feel safer with the existing managers.
12. (3 min) *Mike Deering, Silver City (Porcupine Mountain Ski Hill Operations)*: Mr. Deering expressed his love and concern for the Porkies that he's developed over the course of 43 years. He spoke about his overwhelming support for Mr. Bill Perrin and his expertise in operating the ski hill despite declining funding and weather conditions since he took over, and his anger and outrage listening to the previous comments noting an investigation should occur into how the contract was awarded to anyone else other than the current concessionaries.

Chair Lorenson concluded the public comment period of the meeting and thanked everyone for taking the time and effort to speak before the Council. He asked Ms. Haughey if there were any additional comments she'd like to make. **Ms. Haughey** referenced the Gogebic Community College's letter shown on screen that indicated they will no longer provide their services after the 2020-2021 contract year. She indicated there is a great amount of misinformation circulating which is dividing the community. She noted a legal contract has been signed with the new vendor, following the competitive bid process for concessionaires, and a way to move forward in a positive light must be explored. **Chair Lorenson** offered the Council's help in disseminating factual information if necessary. **Ms. Haughey** stated the DNR and Council appreciates the feedback and input from everyone who attended the meeting this evening.

Mr. Johnson asked if the previous vendor sold season passes to the public for next year. **Mr. Rich** stated the sale of season passes for next year will be put on the states' registration system. **Ms. Haughey** mentioned she is aware of activities and event contracts past the contract date that were signed and the DNR is working through those. **Mr. Solka** asked for a clarification of when the new vendor will begin their contract; **Mr. Rich** stated the new vendor contract starts on May 1, 2022.

Old Business

1. **Wolf Management Advisory Council Meeting Update (Ms. Haughey)**
 - The WMAC met in Sault Ste. Marie on March 15 and 16. Their next meeting is April 6 & 7 in Roscommon and they will be addressing sections 6.9 and 6.11 of the wolf management plan.
 - The May meeting will be on May 16 & 17 at the Marquette Township Community Center. The next Western UP Citizens' Advisory Council meeting will also be on May 17th in the evening at the same location.
 - As shown at previous meetings, an excerpt of the legislation was provided indicating "*the Council shall submit to the NRC and the legislature a report that makes non-binding recommendations as to the proper management of wolves in Michigan.*"
 - To review the current wolf management plan, look up meeting information, and for public comment instructions: www.michigan.gov/wmac.

2. Marquette County Shooting Range Update (Ms. Haughey)

- A project review is taking place which includes comments from tribal leaders.
- Information will be provided to the USFWS to complete their review and award the construction grant modification.
- The grant from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund has been extended.
- DNR staff will be discussing responsibilities and cleanup/closure steps at the Sands Township site.
- It is hoped the construction contract award will be made this spring or early summer, with construction to begin this summer. Completion may or may not be this year.
- Parks & Recreation Division is working with the National Guard to build outhouses for project. They will also seek partnerships for range construction components to help with costs.

3. DNR Response to Council's January Resolution – Council Opposes Superior Solar Project and Land Agreement Modification (Ms. Haughey)

- This resolution pertained to the Superior Solar project and does not involve the Groveland Mine solar project.
- The DNR does not own the property in the Superior Solar project but has an interest in the recreational rights of the property.
- A copy of the response from Mr. Scott Whitcomb, Director, DNR Office of Public Lands was forwarded to the Council prior to the meeting, which indicated the land agreement modification is part of an ongoing application and the Council's resolution will be considered as part of the DNR's final decision.
- Council questions:
 - **Mr. Lindquist** asked if the DNR plans to develop written criteria for solar projects on state land or lands they have an interest in. **Ms. Haughey** stated with this particular project, the DNR does not own the land—it is Cleveland Cliffs property. She stated Mr. Whitcomb provided an overview at a previous Council meeting about solar development on state land. **Mr. Lindquist** indicated he thought Mr. Whitcomb was going to forward to the Council a description of the assets the state uses to evaluate solar projects. **Ms. Haughey** stated she recalls discussion about a statewide plan and will look into this for him.

New Business

1. Bluesource-Michigan DNR Wolverine-Copper Country Forest Carbon Project (Mr. David Price)

- **Mr. Price** introduced himself as the manager of the Forestry Division's operations section.
- *Why MDNR Carbon Projects:* Stems from executive directives Governor Whitmer put into place to respond to climate change beginning in 2018. The first directive implemented policies to advance the goals of the Paris Agreement, aiming to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 26-28% below 2005 levels by 2025. It also accelerated new and existing policies to reduce carbon pollution and promote lean energy deployment on the state and federal level. The goals of the second directive in 2020 is to achieve economy-wide carbon neutrality no later than 2050 and to achieve a 28% reduction below 1999 levels in greenhouse gas emissions by 2025. Also directed EGLE to establish a process to put together a Michigan Healthy Climate Plan. The DNR formed a team to evaluate what could be done to advance the intent of the Governor's directives. One thing was to explore carbon offsite credits from state forest land. With support from DNR Director Eichinger and the Governor, staff spoke with the Michigan Nature Conservancy who has experience with selling carbon credits on two of their reserves in the UP. Staff also spoke with their consultant Bluesource.
- *Michigan Carbon Projects:* Carbon offset credit projects are not new to Michigan. Other entities have ventured with carbon projects. A listing of Michigan landowners, developers and acreage were shown.

Most notably is Hancock Timber with 229,600 acres entered into carbon agreements in 2013 with Bluesource as the developer.

- *DNR State Forest Carbon Projects:* These types of projects are feasible to accomplish on state forest lands and are compatible with forest management objectives. The first project was a pilot, called the Big Wild Forest Carbon Project, which includes over 101,000 acres in the Pigeon River Country Forest Management Unit and was listed with the American Carbon Registry (ACR) in August 2020. The second project is the Wolverine-Copper Country Forest Carbon Project and includes over 120,000 acres in the northern lower and western upper peninsulas and was listed with ACR in December 2021.
- *Big Wild Forest Carbon Project:* The history and demographics of these lands were described as well as why it was chosen for a carbon project.
- *Wolverine-Copper Country Carbon Project:* This area includes 93,000 of northern hardwood forest in the lower peninsula with the remaining acreage in a very remote and hard to manage area of the Keweenaw peninsula that is heavily used for recreation.
- *American Carbon Registry:* The American Carbon Registration Improved Forest Management Methodology for Non-Federal US Forestlands is the project registry. The ACR is a non-profit enterprise, founded in 1996 as the world's first private, voluntary greenhouse gas registry. It is focused upon certified managed forestland. Required carbon pools include above and below ground standing live wood, above ground standing dead wood (also in unmanaged stands), and harvested wood projects. ACR accounts for leakage and risk of reversal (acts of God) and requires a 40-year minimum project length (two 2-year crediting periods). Not only is the DNR selling carbon credits for the carbon that is stored in the forest, but there is also credit for timber that is harvested, and it goes into durable forest products.
- *About Bluesource:* They are largest carbon offset developer in North America, based in Salt Lake City and has the most experience with the American carbon industry. There is no company that has similar experience locally within the Great Lakes and they have notable partnerships in the UP as mentioned previously. They have a no cost contract with the State of Michigan, meaning they don't get paid for their work up front until they demonstrate a viable project, and the state sells a product.
- *Bluesource Services:* Bluesource's process was explained: project feasibility analysis, contracting and listing, inventory, modeling and documentation, verification, credit registration and issuance, and credit sale.
- *Development Timeline:* The entire process for each project takes about 18 months. A timeline of each facet of the overall process was shown.
- *Big Wild Project Development Timeline:* Completed work includes: establishment and measurement of CFI plots (Green Timber Consulting Foresters of Pelkie, MI), DTE Energy commitment to purchase the first 10 years of carbon offset credits (DTE Energy could offer the offset credits to customers in their industrial natural gas program as they strive to reduce their carbon footprint while taking other measures such as transitioning from coal plants to more renewable energies, like wind and solar statewide), final carbon model baseline to determine the volume of credits. Next steps include: third party verification of the model November 2021-March 2022, offset credit registration and issuance March-April 2022, and sale of credits June 30, 2022, when the DNR would receive money from the first carbon project. Monies received would be tied to the acquisition source of land, so for example, if the land was tax reverted, it would go to the forest development fund, or if game lands, the game fund, etc.
- *Wolverine-Copper Country Project Development Timeline:* Since this is a fairly new project, the registration of the project with ACR has been completed. The next steps after snow melt include an RFP for establishment and measurement of CFI plots, marketing for a buyer, develop carbon model baseline to determine the volume of credits, third party verification of the model, offset credit registration and issuance, and then the sale of credits.

- *DNR Management Obligations:* Update management plans as required by statute (in the process of this now); implement approved management plans per usual procedures; annually report harvest species, volumes and shape files for completed payment units within project area; and advise Bluesource of any pending and actual changes in ownership within the project area. Once managements plans are remodeled, staff will be coming back to the Council and many other stakeholder groups later this year or early next year on the results before the new state forest management plan is finalized.
- *Council questions:*
 - **Mr. Johnson** stated the current inventory program has issues with the canopy cover and a difference in what was cut and what was inventoried originally and asked if that incorrect information is being used to determine what the carbon credits are. He also asked how carbon credits will help the DNR manage for wildlife and other resources better. **Mr. Price** stated the inventory is based on a continuous forest inventory plots and a standardized methodology where data is collected in much more detail than the process used in compartment reviews. He noted the DNR has great qualitative data on the state forest as far as the composition of forest stands and is now looking to transition to collect more quantitative data which is what is needed for the forest planning model going forward. He added these projects will help wildlife through the monies received from the sale of carbon credits which goes back to the fund based upon how the lands were originally acquired. Many times, this would be the state game funds.
 - **Mr. Schulz** asked if these programs have any effect on motorized trails and if it changes the amount of taxes going to local school districts. **Mr. Price** stated it does not impact trails or restrict access in any way; all current uses will continue. All revenues derived from state forest lands will go to their designated funds.
 - **Ms. Mason Sherrill** stated it concerns her that large companies with lots of money and who have large carbon footprints could buy these carbon credits but yet continue polluting. She asked about transparency requirements, as well as how the public directly benefits from the sale of carbon credits on public land. **Chair Lorenson** noted in the interest of time, he will ask that these questions and any others from Council members be submitted prior to the next meeting and a response can be brought up under Old Business at the next meeting.
 - **Chair Lorenson** thanked Mr. Price for his presentation and looks forward to speaking with him again at the next meeting if he is available.

2. Deer Camp Survey Results (Mr. DePue)

- **Chair Lorenson** deferred this topic to the next meeting due to time constraints.

3. Walleye Genetics & Stocking Overview (Mr. Patrick Hanchin)

- *Introduction:* **Mr. Hanchin** indicated he is on the Fisheries Division walleye committee and will speak on walleye genetics. Genetics as it pertains to fish management is not an exact science. Opinions about genetics depend on one's risk tolerance. Varying opinions created inconsistency in where strains were stocked.
- *History:* Many brood source locations. Normally use closest location but fish have been stocked across basins. Muskegon River and Saginaw Bay are related, but Muskegon River, St. Mary's River, and Little Bay de Noc differ from one another. A side note: walleyes from Lake Gogebic are very unique and may represent an ancestral reef spawning strain.
- *Need for a Policy?* Division stocking guidelines suggest maintaining local genetic integrity. Evidence supports protecting primary brood source locations. Currently not enough evidence to adopt a holistic genetic management unit concept. Tagging data suggest strong spawning site fidelity.
- *Stocking Strategy:* Stocking from various brood source locations should be based on the relative risk it presents to a waterbody, basin, and the overall genetic structure of walleyes in Michigan. Options

developed to guide fisheries managers were reviewed briefly and examples provided. A map shown on screen highlights those protected areas around three primary brood source locations.

- *Future Research Needs:* Re-establish reef spawning walleyes in Saginaw Bay. Monitor various spawning runs to assess divergence. Further evaluation of overall genetic structure statewide.
- *Council Questions:*
 - **Mr. Johnson** asked, in reference to the Menominee River, why there are issues with certain strains when other states (i.e. Wisconsin) are planting in the same bodies of water that are fished by Michigan residents. **Mr. Hanchin** stated it may not be a different genetic strain. If it's similar, it's not an issue. If it's different, it could introduce some outbreeding depression across the state line. It becomes more complicated working with other border states in this regard. Mr. Pearson from the audience added the source of the walleye strain used by Wisconsin is from below the Hattie Street bridge dam and is considered a Lake Michigan stream.
 - **Chair Lorenson** suggested to Mr. Pearson to utilize his remaining public comment time at this juncture.
 - **Mr. Pearson** thanked Mr. Hanchin for providing the refreshing viewpoint. He spoke further about his sportsman's group effort in resorting the 75,000 pounds of walleye that were illegally taken, and later prosecuted, from Little Bay de Noc. They have been raising money to raise walleyes for re-stocking and aren't sure whether they are making a difference or not. The group feels they are putting efforts forth that allows the DNR to focus their efforts elsewhere. They are trying to help the fishery. 14 million more fish over a 10-year period go to Lake Superior than what goes into Lake Michigan. In hearing about genetics, it is possible to put St. Marys' strain walleyes into Lake Superior and keep more of the walleye in the Lake Michigan watershed. The group is struggling to maintain volunteers, raise money, and many of their questions about how their efforts are helping have remained unanswered. As a result, their club made a difficult vote this year not to raise walleyes. He stated the club is frustrated. He noted they are working for brown trout efforts, but he is asking the DNR to consider the walleye taken from their area that they are trying to restore. He thanked the Council for allowing him to speak.
 - **Mr. Hanchin** explained the differences between fry stocking and spring fingerlings, noting that fry are easy to obtain and a very cheap way to put walleyes in a system. He stated he can share the data that breaks it out by fry and spring fingerlings to paint the complete picture. Mr. Pearson stated he's done that and agrees with him, however, it's the appearance of the effort that is not happening in northern Lake Michigan and is being done elsewhere and they don't want to carry the burden any longer.

4. 2022 Fishing Regulation Change Proposals (Mr. Madison)

- April 1st is the start of the 2022 fishing season. All new fishing regulations for the 2022 season will be highlighted in red font in the fishing digest.
- Regulation changes for the Western UP were shown briefly on screen.
- A proposal was made to clean up the trout lake lists; media and press releases typically touch on the trout changes.
- Lake Gogebic: Discussed previously was a suggested change to the walleye minimum size limit to two fish between 13 to 15-inches. A survey will be conducted within the next 3-4 weeks with a public meeting to follow, providing ample opportunity to provide input on walleyes in Lake Gogebic over the summer.
- Coffee and Conversations meetings will be held next week; individuals can also contact Mr. Madison or Mr. Hanchin for more information on 2022 regulations or proposed regulation changes for next year.
- Splake: All Michigan stocked Lake Superior splake and steelhead are now fin-clipped and folks should report on the DNR website or call an office if they catch one.
- **Chair Lorenson** encouraged everyone to attend the Coffee and Conservation meetings to provide input.

5. State Park Seasonal Job Openings (Mr. Rich)

- State parks are looking for about 1,300 seasonal workers to operate the parks during the summer season. Some parks, due to their remote location, have extreme difficulty finding workers. Invigorated marketing efforts are underway, including easy texting methods, options for housing, increased wages in some cases, etc. Council members are asked to help spread the word. If anyone is looking for a fun seasonal job, please contact **Mr. Rich** and he will make sure to get them connected.

Reports from Committee Meetings Held

Chair Lorensen opened the floor for reports from the following Committees.

1. Fisheries (Mr. Dropps):

- The committee met on March 8 and addressed a few items.
- A committee member had expressed a concern about the number of B-type trout lakes and the committee is hoping there could be a presentation at an upcoming meeting. **Mr. Madison** suggested the Joint UPCAC meeting as the east side of the UP also has declining trout lakes. **Chair Lorensen** noted the request.
- An issue about Smoky Lake in Iron County needs to be investigated further.
- **Resolution for Consideration:** After making a clarification to the background information sheet (adding “...on spring fingerlings for...” to the last sentence of the 4th paragraph, **Mr. Dropps** presented to the Council (emailed to the Council on 3/15/22) a resolution for consideration to “***modify the Fisheries Division’s \$30 million hatchery windfall budget to include monies to enhance walleye fisheries, especially those in the UP.***” Five additional points were included:
 - 1) *Changed to Item 5: Invest monies in the Western UP for a stand-alone walleye rearing facility. The new facility should be separate from existing hatcheries, as not to be put on a lower priority for production of other fish as has happened in the past.*
 - 2) *Changed to Item 1: Newly lined drainable ponds should be added. These ponds should provide better fish survival while reducing manhours needed to harvest spring fingerlings.*
 - 3) ~~*Changed to Item 2: Hire seasonal workers to help in managing rearing ponds.*~~
 - 4) ~~*Changed to Item 3: Appoint a dedicated fisheries person in each management area, who’s main responsibility will be production of the walleye rearing ponds.*~~
 - 5) *Changed to Item 4: Add ponds to rear minnows to allow for rearing of fall fingerlings.*
- **Council Discussion on the Resolution:**
 - **Chair Lorensen** suggested the items listed be put in priority order since the money coming to the division is one-time funding as he understands it.
 - **Mr. Dropps**, with concurrence from the Fisheries Committee members, agreed to change the order of items, moving Item 1 to Item 5 and moving the rest of the items up (changes underlined above).
 - **Mr. Wesley** clarified the one-time funding is not in or part of the current Fisheries Division budget. It is a one-time general fund appropriation, for infrastructure needs for current hatcheries, included in the Governor’s proposed fiscal year 2023 state budget that was submitted to the legislature in February. He expressed caution that what is in the proposed state budget cannot be changed at this point as it’s currently being reviewed in the House and Senate. **Mr. Dropps** stated the walleye ponds could be added at the hatchery level and would be well within their budgets. **Mr. Wesley** responded it would take away from what is being proposed in the Governor’s budget for those existing hatchery systems. The Fisheries Division invests over a million dollars in trout stocking in the UP and if those infrastructure items are not maintained, it would impact the trout hatcheries. **Mr. Dropps** stated the committee’s position is the proposed infrastructure projects are silver plated and some monies could be used to add a couple of ponds. **Mr. Wesley** stated he would welcome the committee to have a meeting at one of the hatcheries, perhaps the Thompson Fish Hatchery where four new half-acre ponds were constructed

as well as two one-acre ponds, to see first-hand the investment made in both walleye and musky pond management.

- **Chair Lorenson** asked when the Fisheries Division put together the wish list for the Governor’s budget, was input from the CACs or other advisory groups considered or was it an internal decision. **Mr. Wesley** stated it is usually an internal process, and in this case, 20-30 proposals came forward from all aspects of the department and infrastructure improvements were the top request. The division felt those improvements had the best chance of getting approved for a one-time general fund appropriation by the Governor’s office and legislature. He added most of the DNR projects from fisheries, parks and recreation and law enforcement included in the Governor’s proposed budget all relate to infrastructure, equipment, and maintenance needs. The Fisheries Division has had a list of infrastructure items that have needed fixing for a number of years--some hatcheries are 50 years old—but there has never been significant money in the division’s budget or state budget to allow for these expensive repairs.
 - **Chair Lorenson** asked how this funding relates to the COVID relief funding. **Mr. Wesley** stated it is a one-time general fund request for infrastructure maintenance. There is a surplus of general fund monies in the state budget because of COVID relief funding the state received. **Chair Lorenson** stated as a result of this one-time funding, other monies in the division’s budget should be freed up over time to allow for projects like the Fisheries Committee is suggesting; **Mr. Wesley** agreed. **Mr. Hanchin** added if the state’s proposed budget passes and it still includes this one-time infrastructure funding as submitted, those projects would have to be done first. If there is leftover funding, which wouldn’t be known for two years, then it could be used for pond maintenance. Also noted, one-time funding appropriations cannot be used to fund staffing of any sort. The division’s management team is looking to fund short-term workers for every management unit to help with some of the suggestions, but it cannot be through a one-time appropriation because there wouldn’t be ongoing funding to support them. Discussion ensued. **Mr. Wesley** added another clarification that unlike normal division budgets, one-time monies received usually have strings attached and must be spent according to what was submitted. For example, when the one-time appropriation was given to make improvements at the Thompson Fish Hatchery, that money could not be used on anything else but those improvements.
 - **Chair Lorenson suggested newly numbered Items 2 and 3 of the proposed resolution be stricken since staffing is not able to be funded by one-time funding; the three remaining items (Items 1, 4, and 5) could be defined as hatchery maintenance or improvements.** **Mr. Dropps** agreed and also pointed out that Chief Dexter did include in his handout of what the \$30 million appropriation would be spent on a designation for staffing under the Tribal Coordination Unit. **Mr. Hanchin** clarified that the staffing request is a completely separate appropriation request and could be approved or denied separately. Discussion continued.
- **Council Vote on the Resolution:**
- **Chair Lorenson** indicated the resolution has been revised through discussion and now contains three items to be considered under hatchery maintenance or improvement projects (Items 1, 4 and 5...see above text for revision). He asked for a motion from the Council. **Mr. Schulz motioned to accept the revised resolution as presented; Mr. Johnson supported the motion. An online poll was taken asking support for the resolution: Yes: 13 of 15 (87%). No: 2 of 15 (13%). Abstain: None. Absent: See page 1. No further discussion. Motion carried by majority.**
 - **Mr. Hanchin** noted the proposed state budget is with the legislature and the Governor and changes by the DNR to the proposed appropriation is not likely. **Chair Lorenson** indicated it would have been helpful if requests from advisory groups were considered when the wish list was created two years ago

since walleye rearing has been requested for years. **Mr. Hanchin** suggested it may be helpful at this time for committee members to contact their local legislators regarding the request.

2. Forestry: No report at this time.
3. Trails/Recreation/Law (Chair Lorensen): No report due to time constraints.
4. Wildlife (Mr. Lindquist): No report due to time constraints.

Next Meeting

1. Next Meeting Date: **Chair Lorensen** noted the next meeting will be on Tuesday, May 17, 2022, beginning at 6:00pm Eastern / 5:00pm Central. The meeting will be held in person at the Marquette Township Community Center in Marquette. He added the Wolf Management Advisory Council will also be meeting earlier on this same day from 9:00am-3:00pm Eastern in the same location.
2. Items for Next WUPCAC Meeting Agenda: **Chair Lorensen** asked for any suggested topics for the next meeting be sent to him, Ms. Haughey or to Ms. Dahlstrom. Several follow-up items and deferred topics will be added.

Public Comments (On Any Topic)

Chair Lorensen noted that Mr. Pearson and Mr. Skrumbellos who registered for public comment on topics not listed on the agenda were accommodated at the first public comment section of the agenda.

Council Closing Comments

Chair Lorensen deferred closing comments due to time constraints with agreement from the Council.

Adjournment

Chair Lorensen thanked everyone for attending the meeting. He adjourned the meeting at 8:46pm Eastern/ 7:46pm Central.