

Western Upper Peninsula Citizens' Advisory Council (WUPCAC)
Meeting Minutes – APPROVED 7/25/24
Monday, March 25, 2024
5:00-7:30pm Central / 6:00-8:30pm Eastern
Virtual via Zoom

Council Members Present

Erik Bessonon	George Lindquist	Carol Mason Sherrill
Floyd Dropps	Chauncey Moran	Jeff Sierpien
Barb Gajewski	Horst Schmidt	Tom Solka, Chair
Dave Hall	Kirk Schott, Vice Chair	Dwaine Starr
Dave Johnson	Skip Schulz	Faye Williams

Council Members Absent/Excused

Mike Holmes	Kelly Bennett Simon	Lucas Vold
Suzanne Petschke	Warren Suchovsky	

Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Staff & Guests

Dave Anthony, Natural Resources Commissioner
Kristi Dahlstrom, Executive Division, Marquette
Stacy Haughey, UP Field Deputy-Executive Division, Marquette
Cory Kovacs, Fisheries Division, Newberry
Darren Kramer, Fisheries Division, Escanaba
Sgt. Mark Leadman, Law Enforcement Division, Marquette
Dave Lemmien, Wildlife Division, Sault Ste. Marie
Cpl. Jill Miller, Law Enforcement Division, Bay City
John Pepin, Executive Division, Marquette
Doug Rich, Parks & Recreation Division, Baraga
Tom Seablom, Forest Resources Division, Marquette
Jon Spieles, Chief-Marketing & Outreach Division, Marquette
Lt. Tom Wanless, Law Enforcement Division, Lansing

Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance

At 6:01pm Eastern, **Chair Solka** called the meeting to order and led the Pledge of Allegiance. He welcomed everyone in attendance for the virtual session of the WUPCAC. He explained the meeting was originally planned to be held in person in Baraga; however, a winter storm and predicted freezing rain made driving hazardous. After conferring with the Vice Chair and DNR staff, he made the decision to transition to a virtual meeting.

Introductions of Council Members/DNR Staff/Public Attendees

Ms. Dahlstrom provided a roll call of virtual attendees at the request of **Chair Solka**. **Chair Solka** provided a brief overview of the Council's role as chartered by the DNR. He noted all Council members volunteer to serve on this Council on their own time and expense.

Ms. Haughey reviewed virtual meeting etiquette and then welcomed everyone to the meeting including members of the public who registered to attend: NRC Commissioner Dave Anthony, Emma Woelkers (Senator Peter's office), Gina Nicholas, Connie Julien, Chad VanBennekom, Nancy Warren, Chris Reister, Mike Kidder, Mike Veine, Ryan Tanner, Paul France, Phil France, Eugene Clark, Wayne Koppa, Jerry Svoke and Michelle Kanipes.

Adoption of Agenda

Chair Solka asked the Council if there were any further additions or revisions to the agenda. No additions or revisions were brought forth. **Mr. Hall motioned to accept the agenda as presented; Vice Chair Schott supported the motion. After no discussion, Chair Solka called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.**

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

Chair Solka asked if there were any further changes to the January 24, 2024 WUPCAC meeting minutes, which were distributed to the Council via email for review. **Mr. Besson** motioned to accept the minutes as submitted; **Vice Chair Schott** supported the motion. After no discussion, **Chair Solka** called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.

DNR Reports from Division Staff

Written staff reports were provided to Council members on March 18, 2024. The following brief updates were added.

1. **Ms. Stacy Haughey, UP Field Deputy**
 - No additional updates.
2. **Mr. Darren Kramer, Fisheries Division**
 - No additional updates.
3. **Mr. Tom Seablom, Forest Resources Division**
 - No additional updates.
 - **Mr. Schulz** asked about the idea he had a few years ago regarding property for a regional school forest and if there was any update. (Mr. Seablom lost connection until later in the meeting and was unable to respond.)
4. **Sgt. Mark Leadman, Law Enforcement Division**
 - The DNR's Law Enforcement Division is looking to hire several conservation officers for the January 2025 training academy. How many new openings depends on the number of retirements which could be up to 20. The job posting closes on May 23. Applicants must meet the Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement licensing standards and be at least 21 years of age by the time they graduate from the training academy July 3, 2025. Recruits will begin the 26-week academy Sunday, Jan. 5, at the Michigan State Police Training Academy located in Lansing. Previous law enforcement, fishing or hunting experience or a college education are not required to become a conservation officer. Recruits will learn everything they need to be successful during the academy and additional field training. As State of Michigan employees, recruits will receive biweekly paychecks while having the option to collect benefits. Lodging, meals, uniforms and other essential supplies are provided at no cost.
5. **Mr. Doug Rich, Parks & Recreation Division**
 - The Parks & Recreation Division is also recruiting for several open positions including Lake Gogebic State Park, Fort Wilkins State Park and Wells State Park. Full-time and seasonable openings are available immediately. Anyone interested can contact Mr. Rich for more information.
 - **Mr. Moran** asked about the Copperwood Mine project in relation to the Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park. **Mr. Rich** indicated much of the project falls within EGLE's jurisdiction. **Ms. Haughey** noted a handout update was provided to council members at the January WUPCAC meeting. She indicated she can answer additional questions after the meeting. **Mr. Moran** stated he is concerned with the \$50 million from the MEDC's Michigan Strategic Fund to jumpstart the project when it deals with natural resources that cannot be replaced as well as a propensity to pollute the largest body of surface water in the world. He'd like to see the topic discussed at a future meeting.
 - **Mr. Schulz** asked if there will be any surplus from the lack of grooming needed his past season that would affect the payment schedule next year or have an impact on equipment. He also asked how he would go about arranging an event at the Porkies similar in size to the musical festival. **Ms. Haughey** indicated a surplus is not anticipated as there was a significant reduction in registrations and trail permits due to the lack of snow. She indicated she will ask Mr. Yesney to provide an update at the next meeting. As far as an event request, **Mr. Rich** suggested contacting Park Manager Mike Knack and depending on the activity, it would be forwarded from there.

6. **Mr. Dave Lemmien, Wildlife Division**

- Chatter on social media sites were encouraging folks to find wolf survey cameras and record the GPS locations so they can be posted for the public. To date, there have been no reports of cameras being disturbed. Council members were asked to please discourage this activity through their friends and constituent groups. The cameras are expensive and are providing valuable research that will offer a lot of good data moving forward. Disturbing the cameras will interfere and prolong the data. He thanked Mr. Johnson and Vice Chair Gorniak for sending out public service announcements on behalf of UPSA and the Straits Area Sportsman’s Club to leave cameras undisturbed.
- The wolf tracking survey has wrapped up for the winter season. It is a very labor intensive survey. This particular year was challenging due to the lack of snow needed for tracking. Wildlife staff involved were thanked for their diligence in getting the job done. This data along with the camera survey will provide a good comparison.
- **Mr. Sierpien** noted when a brief initial summary was given of the camera survey, it indicated that there were more wolf pictures than coyote pictures, which seemed shocking at the time. **Mr. Lemmien** indicated when Dr. Petroelje provided his presentation, it depicted a trial run with the cameras that did not represent the entire UP data set. Cameras are now deployed across the UP region and there will be shift in the numbers between species.
- **Mr. Hall** asked about the number of deployed cameras, stating he heard it was around 1,200. **Mr. Lemmien** stated that number is correct. **Mr. Hall** asked if cougars will be one of the species counted on these cameras and asked if the current sightings are at 107. **Mr. Lemmien** stated cougars will be part of the overall report and that 107 confirmed occurrences are correct. **Mr. Hall** mentioned hearing from a friend about a cougar encounter with a recently shot deer. **Mr. Lemmien** indicated he was not aware of the encounter, and he was not aware if it had been reported. He suggested contacting the biologist at the Baraga Office.
- **Mr. Lindquist** added clarification that there have been 107 verified reports of cougars over the years, so there may be six reports of the same animal. **Mr. Lemmien** agreed.

Public Comment on Agenda Items Only

Chair Solka opened the floor for public comments on agenda items only.

1. Mr. Eugene Clark, Watersmeet, *Use of Wake Surf Boats on Michigan Waters (pre-registered)*: Mr. Clark stated he lives on the Cisco Chain of Lakes and is the president of the Cisco Chain Riparian Owners Association and treasurer of the Invasive Species Control Coalition of Watersmeet, indicating his commitment to preserving the waters for generations to come. He noted both organizations spend between \$200,000-250,000 each year to educate, monitor, and control the spread of aquatic invasive species in Watersmeet Township as well as volunteer thousands of hours doing the same. He feels there is a gap in Michigan’s boating laws. The current law of 100 feet from shore and a depth of three feet of water is not sufficient for the operation of wake surf boats and do not protect the safety of others, shoreline property and fish and wildlife habitat. He summarized that efforts the people of Watersmeet have spent on maintaining the wilderness quality of the area’s waters is at risk due to insufficient laws regarding this relatively new boating activity. The group supports any legislation that seeks to meaningfully regulate this activity consistent with peer-reviewed independent studies. **Chair Solka** thanked Mr. Clark for his thoughtful comments.

New Business

1. **Michigan Wildlife Council Update (Mr. Spieles)**

- **Mr. Spieles**, Chief of the DNR’s Marketing and Outreach Division, provided a slide presentation and update on the Michigan Wildlife Council, a public education campaign. He indicated a presentation was given many years ago to the Councils and he will be offering a refresher on what the council is about, where they’ve gone and where they are going.

- *Background:* Public Acts 108 and 246 of 2013 established the Michigan Wildlife Council, a 9-member, governor-appointed body. It is funded through \$1 from the sale of every base hunting license and all-species fishing license, which started in 2013-2014. This adds up to about \$1.4 million annually.
- *Goals:* The purpose of the Council is legislatively set in statute. Their charge is to increase Michiganders' understanding that hunting and fishing: are wildlife management tools; fund habitat, wildlife and conservation work; contribute significantly to the economy; and are a part of our state's cultural heritage. The council hired Gud Marketing from Lansing to help them meet these goals.
- *Research Process:* Involves secondary research, interviews, a statewide survey, and qualitative research. Research goals include understand public perception and knowledge; define campaign audience; develop message that speaks to our audience; and use survey to track movement and inform message evolution.
- *Data-Driven Approach:* Michigan residents' attitudes toward hunting, fishing and wildlife conservation.
- *2023 Statewide Survey:* A pie chart showing the percentages of approvals of trapping, fishing and hunting, along with percentages by region for each were shown.
- *Audience Definition:* Key considerations: who are they, where are they, what do they know, what do they believe, how can we get them to pay attention.
 - Highest approval from men, white Michiganders, ages 55+, northern Michigan and UP.
 - Lowest approval from women, black Michiganders, ages 18-34, southeast Michigan.
 - Where does our audience live? Southern lower peninsula with an emphasis on Wayne, Oakland and Macomb Counties.
 - What does our audience think about wildlife, hunting, and sportsmen? When we say wildlife, they hear nature. When we say wild, they hear lions. When we say hunting, they hear deer. When we say sportsmen, they hear athletes. When we say fees, they hear taxes.
- *Communication Channels:* How do we reach our audience? From broad advertising (billboards, back end of bus ads, radio streaming, etc.), innovative partnerships (including special event booths), digital media presence, media outreach, and social medial influencers.
- *Campaign Background:* Slides were shown of several tag lines/messaging with matching photos the campaign utilized.
- *2023-2024 Audience & Goals:* Communications strategy: communicate benefits of well-managed wildlife; showcase people's role in creating and sustaining a healthy outdoors; create new connections to wildlife and management, increasing relevance through trusted influencers. The primary audience are ages 18-34 and in southern Lower Peninsula with an emphasis on Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb counties.
- *2023 Campaign:* A slide was shown with various messaging utilized.
- *2023 Survey Results:* Key metrics:
 - Management by humans is required for wildlife to thrive: 72% agree (24% increase).
 - Hunting is a wildlife management tool: 74% agree (55% increase in strong agreement).
 - Approve of hunting to maintain wildlife populations in balance with their habitat: 78% approve.
 - Legal, regulated hunting leads to the extinction of species: 64% disagree (19% improvement).
 - Hunting and fishing are only important to people to hunt or fish: 55% disagree (22% improvement).
- *What's Next:* Use research to plan for 2024—confirm audiences, refine messaging, and develop tactics. Ensuring our audiences are more aware, more informed and more engaged, which will lead to stronger support of hunting/fishing and the important role hunters and anglers play in conservation. A new campaign will be created and may shift just a bit due to the high cost of media. So much ground has been gained. Michigan is improving perceptions about hunting and fishing in the state, whereas other states are losing ground.
- *Questions:*
 - **Mr. Lindquist** stated he appreciates the update and the work of the council. He suggested colleges be targeted for some of the marketing. He said a lot of college kids have not come from fishing and hunting backgrounds and may be interested in pursuing natural resource degrees. He feels it would be a great benefit.

- **Mr. Hall** stated this was a terrific presentation. He noted one thing that seems to turn people off is poaching and when a poaching incident gets media attention, he feels it creates negativity towards hunting and fishing. **Mr. Spieles** explained some of the survey questions that deal with legal hunting and fishing. He agrees the negativity is hard to dispel and appreciates the comment. **Mr. Hall** stated he encourages DNR officers to increase enforcement of laws as those poaching should be punished, and it should be made public when folks are caught.
- **Mr. Schulz** asked if there are non-hunters and non-anglers like him on the council. **Mr. Spieles** stated the makeup of the council encompasses several areas such as academia, agriculture, hunting, fishing, and others. They all bring a different perspective to the table, and it works.
- A member of the audience asked if there has been an increase in licenses purchased due to the marketing efforts in the demographic regions targeted. **Mr. Spieles** stated he gets this question a lot. However, the focus of the campaign isn't to get more licenses sold, but rather the return on investment is having a more positive impression or perception of the value of hunting and fishing. It is hoped that with an increase in perception, folks would be more inclined to participate. There is no way to register the effects of the campaign in that capacity.
- **Chair Solka** thanked Mr. Spieles for an excellent presentation. He added intangible support is important when there are those in our state who are campaigning to take away hunting and fishing rights, either legislatively or otherwise.

2. Nearshore Boating Effects on Aquatic Habitat & Local Watercraft Control Process (Ms. Haughey, Mr. Kramer, Lt. Wanless)

- **Ms. Haughey** stated the DNR has many different layers and interests from various divisions, some of which overlap. The next presentation will be a fisheries perspective of wake boats in relation to aquatic habitat. She asked the group to remember the state has a robust boating program, including marinas and harbors, and the DNR supports boating in the state of Michigan. The presentation following on the local watercraft control process will be discussed by the Law Enforcement Division. She pointed out the DNR is involved as it pertains to Michigan statutes on local watercraft controls, but there are also local interactions that play a part.
- **Mr. Kramer** provided a scaled down version of a recent paper (#37) put out by the Fisheries Division, regarding wake boat effects on aquatic habitat. He acknowledged his colleagues in the Fisheries Division who put this report together and gave an overview of their backgrounds and experience. A quick explanation of wake boarding and wake surfing was also provided before the presentation.
- *Public Trust Responsibility:* DNR is obligated by the Michigan Constitution to preserve and protect natural resources. DNR Fisheries Division's mission is to protect and enhance Michigan's aquatic life and habitats for the benefit of current and future generations. DNR Fisheries Division's strategic plan goal 1 is to ensure healthy aquatic ecosystems and sustainable fisheries. Shallow water and nearshore areas of lakes are a Wildlife Division action plan key habitat.
- *Purpose of the Report:*
 - DOES: Review the current state of knowledge; provide the Division's position on the operation of wake boats to protect aquatic resources held in public trust; recommend best practices.
 - DOES NOT: Address public safety or social considerations; provide DNR recommendations for regulation or legislation.
- *Wake Boats 101:* Powerboats specially designed to increase wave height for watersports; have true inboard motors with propellor pointed at a downward angle; most have built-in ballast tanks that can be filled with thousands of pounds of water (3,000–5,000 lbs water weight); many have a hydrofoil device that lowers the stern when the boat is under power (up to 1,000 lbs); hull is shaped to achieve significantly increased wakes, including aftermarket wave shapers.
- *Wake Boat Wave Energy:* A combination of wave height, wave period and wave speed. Five studies over time offered the following comparisons.

- Mercier-Blais and Prairie (2014): The waves created in wake-surfing mode were on average 1.7 times higher than those created in cruising mode (because of hull shape, wake boat in cruising mode is likely an overestimate of typical conditions).
- Gouday and Girod (2015) and Ruprecht et al. (2015): Wake boats operating in wake-surfing mode produced the largest waves compared to other modes, with maximum wave energy approximately four times that of waves generated in wake-boarding mode.
- Water Environmental Consultants (2021): Waves produced by a wake boat in wake-surfing and wake-boarding mode had 581% and 68% more energy, respectively, than waves produced by the same vessel operated in cruising mode at a distance of 100 feet.
- Marr et al. (2022): Had 3–9 times more energy.
- MacFarlane (2018): Energy from ballasted wake-surfing craft was 5–17 times higher than a typical speedboat.
- *Wave Dissipation:* Comparison of the time it takes for waves to dissipate compared to a boat operating on normal power.
 - Macfarlane: 400 ft maximum wave height and energy similar to reference motorboats.
 - Marr et al. (2022): Wake boat waves dissipated to those of a typical motorboat (operating in planing mode at a distance of 200) feet for wave height (>500 feet), energy (>575 feet), and power (>600 feet, the maximum distance at which waves were measured in the study).
 - Water Environment Consultants: Waves from a wake boat in wake boarding and wake surfing mode would need distances of 225 feet and 950 feet, respectively, to dissipate to the wave heights observed 100 feet from the same boat in cruising mode.
 - 879-1023: Estimated distances at which a wake boat waves result in equivalent turbulent kinetic energy to normal conditions on two lakes.
 - Additionally: Distance required for wake boat-generated waves to dissipate completely is approximately 984 feet, which is probably an overly protective target.
 - Fay et. al (2022) claims that operating distances of 200 feet are sufficient to reduce wave energy and minimize erosion and resuspension. However, these conclusions are inconsistent with other studies and are built upon substantive analytical and methodological concerns. For example, Fay et al. admit that their methods for modeling waves are not appropriate beyond distances of 100 feet, so it doesn't factor into our assessment.
 - From the studies above, we found that wake boat waves require at least 400–1,023 feet to dissipate to energies of a typical motorboat at 100–200 feet from the sailing line or have minimal resource impacts.
- *Shoreline Erosion:*
 - Main factors that influence shoreline erosion are wave energy, aquatic plants, the slope of the nearshore and bank areas, and characteristics of the bank material.
 - Larger waves strike a shoreline, they are able to dislodge and move more and larger particles.
 - Recreational boating activity can exacerbate erosion by increasing the wave energy that reaches the shoreline.
 - 1,700-acre Whitestone Lake in Ontario (Houser et al. 2021) showed that 61–72% of total wave energy originated from powerboats (mostly typical motorboats 2-3 wake boats).
 - Studies show that wave energies from wake boats are 553 – 2,546% higher than wind waves Water Environmental Consultants (2021).
- *Increased Shoreline Hardening:* Fisheries comments on shoreline permits. Applicants frequently list erosion from wake boats as part of their rationale for seawalls and hardening.
- *Sediment Resuspension:* Powerboating increases sediment resuspension, phosphorus, and algae.
 - Increases nutrients and decreases water clarity in lakes, subsequently reducing the ability of fish to find food.
 - Dissolved oxygen content within the water column decreases.

- Excessive algae growth can occur.
- Resuspended sediments caused by powerboats increase turbidity and phosphorus concentrations in rivers, lakes, and shallow experimental ponds (Yousef et al. 1980; Johnson 1994; USACE 1994; Asplund 1996, 1997; Anthony and Downing 2003).
- *Aquatic Plants:*
 - 20% reductions in aquatic plant coverage due recreational boating (Asplund and Cook 1997).
 - Powerboats reduce aquatic plant biomass, coverage, and shoot height (Asplund and Cook 1997).
 - Recreational boating traffic correlated with declines in aquatic plant abundance (Murphy and Eaton 1983).
 - Wake boats’ larger waves and prop wash likely increase these effects.
- *Chart:* A list of all the papers and literature about distances at which waves had effects from the available studies at the time and used to assess distances at which we determined effects to be minimal to the resource. This document helps provide the information needed to make an informed decision on what and how the Division may make a recommendation.
- *2nd Chart:* Filtered out based on those that fit the Division’s need. Those that did helps to tease out what’s reasonable and measured.
- *Sediment Resuspension:* Raymond and Galvez-Cloutier (2015) found that wake boat propellers generated water velocities with the capacity to resuspend unconsolidated sand, silt, and smaller organic materials at a depth of 15 feet (field data). Models developed by Ray (2020) calculated that modern wake boats can cause sediment resuspension in water down to 33 feet deep.
- *Aquatic Invasive Species:*
 - Wake boat ballast tanks carried 247 zebra mussel veligers (Doll 2018).
 - Wake boat ballast tanks rarely ever completely dry, increasing survival.
 - 5% of zebra mussel veligers remained alive in ballast tanks after 48 hours (Doll 2018).
- *Current Boating Law:*
 - No wake ... within 100 feet of the shoreline where the water depth is less than 3 feet (NREPA 1994b).
 - Reckless operation that disregards the safety or rights of others or endangers the property of others is illegal.
 - Causing damage with a vessel’s wake is a specific example of recklessness identified in the most recent Handbook of Michigan Boating Laws and Responsibilities (MDNR 2021).
 - Fisheries Division concludes that the current 100-foot buffer is not sufficient to protect public trust aquatic resources.
- *Potential Solutions from Outside Michigan:*
 - Shoreline Erosion: Increased operating distances, prohibition in certain areas, ecozone protection.
 - Turbulence and scour: Minimum depth for wake boat operation.
 - Invasive Species: Design to allow complete drying or disinfection of ballast tanks.
 - Education and awareness: Outreach through boating safety classes, flyers, etc.
- *Recommendations:*
 - *Best operating practices under which the recreational opportunities that wake boats provide can be enjoyed in a manner that minimizes harm to the natural resources and property of Michigan citizens:*
 1. Boats operating in wake-surfing mode or wake-boarding mode, during which boat speed, wave shapers, and/or ballast are used to increase wave height, are recommended to operate at least 500 feet from docks or the shoreline, regardless of water depth.
 2. Boats operating in wake-surfing or wake-boarding modes are recommended to operate in water at least 15 feet deep.
 3. Ballast tanks should always be drained prior to transporting the watercraft over land.

At the conclusion of Mr. Kramer’s presentation, **Chair Solka** asked for questions by the Council to be held until after the follow-up presentation by Lt. Tom Wanless on local watercraft control process.

- **Lt. Tom Wanless** provided an overview on this topic from an enforcement perspective. The previous presentation was from the habitat and fisheries perspective. From the law/enforcement perspective, the Marine Safety Act and the PWC (personal watercraft) Act do not address the environment or habitat. The law deals only with public safety and compatible uses. Those are the only two items that can be considered when establishing a local watercraft control. Issues such as high water, low water, dam failure, etc. cannot be addressed through the establishment of a local watercraft control. In order to create any type of local regulation or local restrictions, there are three processes, other than legislatively, that can be used. Two are only temporary measures for things like monumental weather events where temporary restrictions are needed. The third one is a permanent local watercraft control. The procedures to establish this were listed on screen as well as explained.
- First, a request is initiated by a local unit of government who then passes a resolution.
- A public hearing is then held where input is taken from citizens of the community, and a motion is taken to request the DNR to investigate the need for some sort of control. Some are too specific, and some are designed for additional safety.
- The DNR then conducts a field investigation that includes interviewing a variety of folks (local law enforcement, citizens, business owners, marinas, sheriff's department, US Coast Guard, etc.) to learn of the true concerns and legitimate safety issues as well as review past history and complaints, crashes/accidents/fatalities, tickets issued, and warnings given by different law enforcement agencies.
- A preliminary report of initial findings is prepared and sent to the local unit of government.
- The DNR holds a local public hearing to take input from those in attendance.
- A 30-day public comment period follows for those who may not have been able to attend the hearing. The DNR uses this time to compile information for a recommendation and follow up on additional findings.
- After all deadlines and public input has been received, a recommendation is sent to the requesting local unit of government. Many times, the recommendation is one of three things: a denial because existing laws can address the issue(s) and need enforcement; a recommendation to accept the request as submitted; or a recommendation to accept some of the controls requested and/or recommending alternatives that would better address the problems. Many examples were given of the latter.
- The local unit of government can accept the recommendation or decline it. If they accept it, the controls are what is recommended word for word—no changes are accepted—and they must adopt it into local ordinances. If they decline it, it continues to be the way it was as current existing law. Adopting a local ordinance has its own public hearing process which must occur as well.
- Once adopted, the DNR adds an effective date, and notification is sent to the sheriff's department, local law enforcement, DNR law enforcement and it officially becomes a permanent local watercraft control propagated through state law. If there is any signage needed for these local watercraft controls, it is the responsibility of the local municipality to ensure that signage is posted. If buoys are required, the local municipality has to apply for a buoy permit from the local district office and when approved, they must put them in place and monitor them.
- Questions for Mr. Kramer and Lt. Wanless:
 - **Mr. Schulz** asked if any of this applies to frozen waters. **Lt. Wanless** stated it is only for recreational boating. Commercial vessels and freighters cannot be regulated under this act. Snowmobile use on frozen surfaces fall under other regulations. Law enforcement does have the authority to regulate frozen surfaces under the snowmobile or ORV acts, but it is entirely separate.
 - **Mr. Schmidt** asked if there is any research being done for a future program on the effect of resuspension of sediment on the reproductive abilities of fish, mussels and other aquatic life in lakes and also rivers. **Mr. Kramer** stated he can look into what research has been done and revisit this at the next meeting.
 - **Ms. Mason Sherill** stated she hasn't heard any mention of wake boat effects on loons in any of the material or discussions about them. Loons are very exposed and wave action is the number one killer of young chicks. Regular boats cause enough waves but wake boats will be much worse. Wake boats are also very high and will not see loons in their path. Loon nesting areas will also be negatively impacted. She stressed

the need for further protection of loons from wake boats. **Ms. Haughey** noted she would email her some information on loons from the DNR webpage.

- **Chair Solka** suggested wake boats may be a topic for one of the council’s committees to discuss further based on the impact on fisheries, waterfalls, wildlife and water quality, and evaluate whether a resolution would be of any interest.

3. UP Deer Camp Survey Results (Mr. Lemmien)

- **Mr. Lemmien** provided an overview of the UP Deer Camp Survey results. He stated all data included in the report comes from the hunter’s perspective. He also provided a brief history of the survey, which started in 1995, and now includes 20 seasons worth of hunter-driven data.
- *Responses:* 367 responses were received. A UP map was shown with dots representing the general locations of each respondent/hunter. A history of the survey and boundaries were provided.
- *Participation:* The number of camps and hunters participating each year from 2003 to 2023 was shown. There has been a steady decline in participation since 2013.
- *DMUs:* A map of DMUs and the number of surveys received from each DMU was shown.
- *UP-Wide Observations:* Deer seen per hunter day decreased from 3.4 in 2022 to 2.2 in 2023. Percent of hunters harvesting a buck decreased from 24% in 2022 to 19% in 2023. Fawn observations per 100 does decreased from 53 in 2022 to 44 in 2023. Deer herd trend in 2023: more 4%, same 19% and fewer 77%. Season rating: excellent 2%, good 11%, fair 25% and poor 66%.
- *West UP Observations:* Results mirrored the UP-wide observations.
- *East UP Observations:* Deer seen per hunter day decreased from 3.0 in 2022 to 2.4 in 2023. Percent of hunters harvesting a buck increased from 17% in 2022 to 19% in 2023. Fawn observations per 100 does decreased from 50 in 2022 to 43 in 2023. Deer herd trend in 2023: more 13%, same 33% and fewer 54%. Season rating: excellent 2%, good 18%, fair 34% and poor 46%.
- *Number of Deer Observed per Hunter Day and Fawns Observed per 100 Does:* Bar graphs were shown for each, based on the UP-wide observation numbers above. There were 2.2 deer observed per hunter day in 2023; however, the lowest season was in 2015 at 1.6 deer.
- *Percent of UP Camp Rating the Season as Good to Excellent:* 2023 is significantly lower than 2022, however, from 2012 to 2023, 2015 was the lowest.
- *Hunter Participation in the 2023 Firearm Season:* Bar graph was shown. Long term data shows it doesn’t matter which day opening day occurs on. First few days of 2023 season was in the mid 60’s, which plays a factor.
- *Archery Participation by Year:* 23% in 2023 early archery season compared to 18% in 2022. Late archery season participation remains low at 9% in 2023. Conversations related to late archery season have increased. The impact on the deer population for late archery is minimal.
- *Hunter Success Rates at UP Cooperating Deer Camps Over 21 Years:* 19% success rate in 2023 compared to 24% in 2022. It was 14% in 2015.
- *Buck Hunter Success Rates at West and East UP Cooperating Deer Camps Over 20 Years:* For the west, 18% in 2023 compared to 28% in 2022. 15% in 2015.
- *Coyote, Wolf & Bobcat Sightings Per 100 Hunter Days:* Bobcat sightings remain steady, coyote sightings average to be steady, and wolf sightings have increased.

It was noted some of the following slides were not part of the UP Deer Camp Survey.

- *Duration of “Deep” Snow in the UP by Year (Number of Days the Average UP Snow Depth was >12 Inches):* National Weather Service (NWS), which has measuring stations across the UP with satellite imagery is utilized now. There has been 90 days consecutively with 12 inches or greater of snow in the winter ending in 2023. Any time there is 90 cumulative days with 12 inches or more throughout the winter, it is considered a severe winter

and it does have an impact on wildlife. Out of the last 12 winters, 8 of them hit the severe winter mark. From 2004 to 2012, there were only 2.

- *UP Snow & Buck Hunter Success Comparisons*: This chart includes buck hunter success from the mailed camp survey and days of deep snow the winter before that season. Results show years with lower levels of snow have a higher harvest rate.
- *Winter Conditions (Snow Depth), Buck Harvest & Wolf Population (Min. Estimate)*: A multi-tiered graph was shown including these three factors. It also indicates severe winters have a lower deer harvest. The wolf population also show a fairly steady rate.
- *Midwestern States Normal Annual Snowfall from 1961-1990*: Chart shows the eastern UP has had higher snowfall than the rest of the UP.
- *Midwestern States Normal Annual Snowfall from 1981-2010*: Chart shows the entire UP has had higher snowfall, except for the southern tips.
- *Statewide Antlered Deer Harvested through 2013*: This graph is from 1965 to 2013. The UP mirrors this trend. It was noted that from 1965 to 1985, a lot more timber was cut, indicating very low deer harvest levels statewide.
- *Number of Antlered Deer Harvested by Region through 2013*: There is a downward trend across the UP, northern lower and southern lower peninsulas.
- *Summary*: In summary, winters in recent years have shifted. Mild winters occurred for years and are what many of those who have lived in the UP all their lives remembers. Also, in the 1970s, the timber industry took off. Where aspen once wasn't desired, it then became the backbone for paper and OSB board and aspen harvest skyrocketed. Combined with mild winters, there was an explosion of great summer habitat for deer. Things have greatly changed, however, in the last 10 years or so.
- *Questions*:
 - **Mr. Lindquist** stated more people are needed to get involved with the UP deer camp survey, as any survey is better with higher participation. It's a good tool and he appreciates the information.
 - **Mr. Sierpien** stated he reviewed the results of the camp survey and wonders how the DNR can get more people involved in hunting when 90% of survey respondents indicated they've had a dismal hunting experience. He is interested to see how this can be turned around. **Ms. Haughey** indicated she will send him a presentation that was given at the recent UP Sportsman's Alliance meeting that may address that topic.

Old Business

1. Deer Management Initiative Update (Ms. Haughey & Mr. Lemmien)

- Slides of the purpose, stakeholder selection, and responsibilities were shown again for reference.
- The group is very diverse. Some members are extremely involved and have attended several DNR meetings. There are also others who like to hunt but haven't attended any meetings before. It's important to have all perspectives at the table. Over 2,400 people applied to be on one of the two groups; one for the Upper Peninsula and one for the Lower Peninsula.
- This group will be meeting frequently, learning about the process, and ultimately providing recommendations on deer regulations that can be submitted to the DNR and NRC for possible action.
- Ms. Haughey asked for patience to allow this group to meet their goals. She noted this process was requested by the NRC.

2. Moose Hunt Questions Following Resolution Response (Ms. Haughey)

- The DNR's response letter to the Joint UPCAC resolution to implement a limited Michigan moose hunt that was reviewed at the last meeting produced more questions from Council members. The wildlife committee distilled those questions into 11 main ones that they wish the DNR to answer. A slide of the 11 questions were shown on screen.

- **Ms. Haughey** noted that Mr. Stewart who is the specialist on moose has been heavily involved in conducting the DMI meetings and it has been requested that this topic be deferred to the next meeting to allow him time to properly answer the questions.
- **Mr. Lindquist** noted the Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC), representing 220 clubs across the state, had a similar resolution at its annual convention with 115 clubs in attendance. It wasn't worded the same, but their resolution passed unanimously, indicating strong support for doing something. A limited hunt could be a great fundraiser for further developing a moose management plan.

Committee Activity

1. Fisheries (Mr. Dropps/Mr. Johnson)

- **Resolution #1: Recommend any increase in DNR Fisheries revenue be prioritized to provide deliverables (see resolution for 4 deliverables described):** On behalf of **Mr. Dropps, Mr. Johnson** explained the resolution and the committee's reasonings for bringing it forward for the Council's consideration. In summary, the committee feels the DNR Fisheries Division did not deliver on several key initiatives to improve fisheries habitat in inland lakes and streams and increase health and quantity of fish stocked since the last license fee increase in 2014. With an increase in revenue coming forward through a possible new license fee increase proposal, the committee would like to see several deliverables addressed and prioritized.
 - **Chair Solka** called for a motion. **Mr. Lindquist motioned *the Council recommends any increase in DNR Fisheries Division revenue be prioritized to provide four deliverables (as stated in written resolution)***. **Vice Chair Schott supported the motion.** **Chair Solka** called for discussion.
 - **Mr. Horst** asked where the proposed increased revenue will be coming from. **Mr. Johnson** stated there are discussions of a proposed fishing license fee increase in the near future.
 - **Mr. Kramer** indicated Fisheries Division staff have been looking for ideas from constituents on ways to increase revenue to maintain/continue with what the Division currently provides. With the last fee increase in 2014, costs have risen considerably, and the Division is not able to provide the same level of services as it has in the past. Changes will have to be made if funding doesn't increase. The conversation and coffee events held talked about ideas and concerns and he stated the committee's efforts are appreciated. He further explained the discussions that took place at the events.
 - **Mr. Lindquist** stated a senior discount was being suggested by some. However, the bulk of those fishing seem to be seniors so it would seem to contradict a revenue increase. He indicated it was noted the general fund was supposed to make up for the discounts, but it isn't happening, so the Division loses a great deal of funding.
 - **Mr. Schulz** noted his disappointment in the loss of stocking family fishing ponds, which encourage kids to go fishing. He stated his tournament last year didn't get any fish.
 - **Mr. Schmidt** asked how much of the division's budget is for personnel and maintaining the hatcheries, and would the increase be used for personnel or the increase in costs to run everything. **Mr. Kramer** looked up the information and reported for FY 2024, the total budget is \$33.5 million with payroll being 72% of that. Travel is 3% and equipment is 19%.
 - **Being no further discussion, Chair Solka called for an online poll vote. Results were displayed on screen. With 12 of 14 voting in support and 2 opposed, the motion passed by majority.**
- **Resolution #2: Oppose expansion of underwater spearing under regulation FO 219.25:** On behalf of **Mr. Dropps, Mr. Johnson** explained the second resolution and the committee's reasonings for bringing it forward for the Council's consideration. In summary, the committee feels if this proposal by the Michigan Spearfishing Association to expand underwater spearfishing in the Great Lakes were to be approved, it would eventually expand to inland lakes and waters which would devastate the current fisheries.
 - **Chair Solka** called for a motion. **Mr. Schulz motioned *the Council recommends the DNR oppose expansion of underwater spearing under regulation FO 219.25***. **Mr. Hall supported the motion.** **Chair Solka** called for a discussion.

- **Mr. Sierpien** stated he is against this resolution and explained why. He stated he would like to know if research proves or disproves that there would be a negative impact to the fishery rather than base a decision on whether one group prefers it or not.
- **Mr. Lindquist** indicated there should've been a three-year study done and it's only been two years and the Association has already come back with an expansion proposal. The impacts are not known yet.
- **Mr. Schmidt** asked what the reasoning was for the DNR to consider the idea of increasing spearfishing in the first place and what is the percentage of spear fishers compared to the total number of people who fish to understand how many people would take part. **Mr. Kramer** indicated the Michigan Spearfishing Association initially came to the NRC to ask for additional spearfishing opportunities on non-game species. In 2018, they again proposed opportunities to harvest walleye, lake trout, northern pike across the Great Lakes. After review and approval by the NRC, they were granted a small section in the lower peninsula to harvest these species. The Association has again submitted this newest proposal for further expansion. The Division brought this proposal to the conversation and coffee events, and **Mr. Kramer** stated he is pleased the Council is providing feedback. He further explained the process and will look up the data.
- **Mr. Sierpien** asked if Mr. Kramer knew the number of spear fishers to shed light on how many people actually take part in the sport and if there have been any negative effects where it is currently allowed. **Mr. Kramer** stated the number of hours by spear fishers was 3,500 in 2022 and about 2,000 in 2023. The number of trips by spear fishers was roughly 975 in 2022 and 500 in 2023. For harvest, about 70% of the harvest came from Lake Huron and 30% from Lake Michigan for those species mentioned above, including about 500 walleye in 2022 and 350 in 2023. Most of them came from Saginaw Bay. For comparison, roughly 350,000 total walleye were harvested from Lake Huron in 2023, with 350 of them being from spear fishing. Relatively speaking, it is a small amount.
- **Mr. Dropps** mentioned he learned there is about 40% of spear fishers who don't report in which may make the data questionable. There also hasn't been any discussion or evaluation of the equipment that should or shouldn't be used. **Mr. Johnson** stated in his almost 60 years of experience with diving and spearing, spearing is much more effective than sitting with a fishing pole with bait on it. **Mr. Lindquist** noted spearing does not allow for fair chase.
- **Mr. Kramer** stated this topic will also be covered at the EUPCAC meeting in Manistique next month by Mr. Kovacs and Mr. Caroffino from the Fisheries Division. If anyone would like to hear more information about the topic, he encouraged them to attend.
- **Being no further discussion, Chair Solka called for an online poll vote. Results were displayed on screen. With 11 of 14 voting in support, 1 opposed, and 2 neutral, the motion passed by majority.**

2. Wildlife (Mr. Lindquist)

- **Mr. Lindquist** reported the committee has not met. However, he'd like to see the DMI's recommendations as soon as they become available so the committee can review them and develop possible resolutions to support or not support them. He stated he would also like the committee to review any presentations that have been made available to the DMI. The committee has a great interest in the DMI's activities and would like to follow along.

3. Trails/Recreation/Law (Ms. Gajewski)

- **Ms. Gajewski** reported the committee does not have anything to bring forward at this time.

4. Other Committee Activity: None.

Next Meeting

1. Next Meeting: **Chair Solka** noted the next Council meeting will be held in person on Wednesday, May 29 at Gogebic Community College in Ironwood beginning at 6:00pm Eastern, 5:00pm Central. *AFTER MEETING NOTE: The March*

meeting agenda had the next meeting date listed incorrectly as May 30th. Also, on April 22nd, the May meeting was changed to a virtual informational meeting and an email notice was sent to all council members.

2. Items for Next Meeting Agenda: **Chair Solka** stated planned topics for the next meeting agenda include a tentative response to recent resolutions, a discussion on several questions related to a limited moose hunt and moose management, and an update on the DMI recommendations. Any additional items can be emailed to him or Ms. Dahlstrom before early May when a draft agenda is discussed.

Public Comments (On Any Topic)

Chair Solka opened the floor for public comments on any topic; none were brought forth.

Closing Comments from the Council

1. **Chair Solka** indicated Ms. Mason Sherrill left the meeting earlier; however, he wanted to relay the information she was going to speak about regarding the Covert Project/Workshop for Woodland Wildlife Stewardship. The workshop isn't until August, but the deadline is June 15. It is sponsored by multiple agencies and looks very worthwhile for those interested in management of woodlands particularly as it relates to wildlife. He indicated he will add this to the closing comments for the next agenda to allow Ms. Mason Sherrill to explain it in more depth. Ms. Dahlstrom indicated she will forward a flyer and information to Council members the next morning via email.
2. **Mr. Schmidt** asked if there was any involvement by the DNR on the recent development of an Isle Royale seaplane service setting up in a location on Torch Lake. He indicated many local residents are concerned. **Ms. Haughey** indicated the DNR does not have any involvement in this endeavor.

Adjournment

Chair Solka thanked everyone for attending the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 9:31pm ET.