

Western Upper Peninsula Citizen Advisory Council (WUPCAC)

APPROVED – Meeting Minutes – APPROVED

Wednesday, May 17, 2023

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

Bay College West, 2801 US 2, Iron Mountain

Council Members Present

Erik Bessonon
Floyd Dropps
Barb Gajewski
Mike Holmes
Dave Johnson

George Lindquist
Suzanne Petschke
Kirk Schott, **Vice Chair**
Jeff Sierpien
Tom Solka, **Chair**

Dwaine Starr
Warren Suchovsky
Lucas Vold
Faye Williams

Council Members Absent/Excused

Dave Hall
Chauncey Moran

Horst Schmidt
Skip Schulz

Carol Mason Sherrill
Kelly Bennett Simon

Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Staff & Guests

CO Jared Ferguson, Law Enforcement Division, Delta/Iron/Menominee Counties
Lori Burford, Marketing & Outreach Division-Shooting Sports Section, Lansing
Kristi Dahlstrom, Executive Division, Marquette
Stacy Haughey, UP Field Deputy, Executive Division, Marquette
Darren Kramer, Fisheries Division, Escanaba
Bill Scullon, Wildlife Division, Norway
PCO Peter Shambaugh, Law Enforcement Division, Western UP
Chad Stewart, Wildlife Division, Lansing

Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance

At 6:02pm Eastern/5:02pm Central, **Chair Solka** called the meeting to order and led the Pledge of Allegiance. He welcomed members of the public as well as DNR staff and fellow Council members.

Adoption of Agenda

Chair Solka asked the Council if there were any further additions or revisions to the agenda; none were brought forth. **Mr. Williams motioned to accept the agenda as presented; Mr. Bessonon supported the motion. After no discussion, Chair Solka called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.**

Introductions of Council Members/DNR Staff/Public Attendees

All public attendees, DNR staff and council members introduced themselves at the request of **Chair Solka**.

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

Chair Solka asked if there were any further changes to the March 21, 2023 meeting minutes, which were distributed to the Council via email for review. **Mr. Bessonon motioned to accept the minutes as submitted; Mr. Williams 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 May 10, 2023. The following brief updates were added.

1. **Ms. Stacy Haughey, UP Field Deputy**

- Special guests who traveled to the UP to provide presentations were thanked.
- The Western UP Citizens' Advisory Council is an advisory group and does not have decision making authority but can forward recommendations in the form of a resolution. Resolutions prepared by the council are submitted to the DNR Director. Regarding the deer regulations being considered by the NRC, the NRC is the decision making body for that process.
- Public comments on natural resource issues are welcome; there are two opportunities during this meeting.

2. **Mr. Darren Kramer, Fisheries Division**

- An update was provided on the Bone Lake public access site (Iron County) washout along with history of the dam located there. The Fisheries Division, Forest Resources Division and Parks & Recreation Division are all aware of the situation and are working with EGLE as the lead agency on the dam.
- **Mr. Kramer** will keep **Mr. Dropps** informed of any updates.

3. **CO Jared Ferguson & PCO Peter Shambaugh, Law Enforcement Division**

- **CO Ferguson** is from District 1, Area 2, which covers Dickinson, Iron & Menominee Counties. **PCO Shambaugh**, who was also present, is currently in training and will be assigned to Gogebic & Houghton Counties upon completion.
- There are currently three officer openings in the UP. This is a significant decrease from past years.
- **Mr. Dropps** asked if anyone was catching fish; **CO Ferguson** stated fishing has been slow.
- **Mr. Sierpien** asked if the streamlined CO training has helped the hiring process. **CO Ferguson** explained for those who have been pre-certified, training is only 12 weeks. It has been very helpful. The academy will continue with a 24-week training period for those not pre-certified.
- **Mr. Lindquist** indicated it is great to see the UP almost fully staffed with officers, as it has been short for many years. The UP Whitetails of Marquette County has always pushed for more COs.
- **Ms. Haughey** commended the entire DNR law enforcement team who worked tirelessly on the search and rescue of a young boy in the Porcupine Mountains. She noted there is a fair amount of misinformation circulating on social media.

4. **Council Questions for Divisions Not in Attendance**

- **Mr. Johnson** asked if there were any additional washouts from the amount of late snow that occurred. **Ms. Haughey** indicated **Mr. Yesney** stated there has been multiple washouts and they are responding to them as quickly as they can.
- **Mr. Lindquist** asked if the May snowstorm was included in the above average snow days mentioned in the Wildlife Division report. **Mr. Scullon**, responded in **Mr. Lemmien's** absence, stating it was not included when the division report was written. He added fortunately the snow didn't persist for long and it melted quickly.
- **Mr. Dropps** indicated he had heard the Baraga and Crystal Falls forest management units (FMU) will be merging. **Ms. Haughey** stated because a supervisor position was not able to be filled after two advertised cycles, the Crystal Falls FMU will be split and merged into the Baraga and Escanaba FMUs. Iron County will now be managed as part of the Baraga FMU and Dickinson County will fall under the management of the Escanaba FMU. Staff located in the respective counties will report to the Unit Managers in Baraga and Escanaba. **Mr. Scullon** added the Wildlife Division works with both units so it will be business as usual from the public's perspective.

Public Comment on Agenda Items Only

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

1. **Mike Taylor, UP Whitetails of Marquette County – Deer Regulations:** Mr. Taylor stated he provided public comment at the May NRC meeting and wanted to address the WUPCAC as well. He spoke about the group's disagreement with some of the proposed UP deer regulations, noting that sportsmen worked for almost 20 years to get the regulations changed to not allow the shooting of does in the northern UP counties due to the decrease in the deer

population in those areas. From the deer camp survey, 77% of respondents do not want a doe season in the northern areas. He also indicated the group also does not recommend the use of crossbows in the late season.

2. *Ed Britton, Amasa – Deer Hunting:* Mr. Britton spoke about the considerable decrease in the deer herd in Iron County. He stated regulations have prevented the taking of a doe in his area for 5 years, but the deer population continues to go down. He has found more wolf tracks than deer tracks. He added the UP has become the last place to go deer hunting now and that isn't what it used to be.

Old Business

1. Marquette County Shooting Range Update (Ms. Lori Burford)

- An update on two new shooting ranges in the UP was provided.
- *Indoor range and meeting space outside of the Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park:* **Mr. Doug Rich** has reported on this previously. It is a partnership with Lake Superior Sportsman's Club. Interior flooring, drywall, etc. is complete. Final paint and trim touchups being done. The exterior siding is to be complete and septic to be installed. Driveway improvements are being done now. The range equipment is installed, and all lanes are ADA compliant. Project completion is anticipated in June with a public opening scheduled for July/August.
- *Marquette County Range Progress:* The contractor is currently building structures for the shooters as well as the baffles on-site. The site has been cleared and some tree debris has been stockpiled for the DNR and National Guard to use in blocking off access to the unauthorized Cliffs/Sands Township site that has been used for years. The National Guard is a partner in the project for training purposes. Earthwork for berm construction will begin soon. Anticipated completion will be in late July or early August, and a public opening will be held in September to coincide with a Conservation Officer who was killed in the line of duty many years ago in the same month. The range will be named after him.
- **Mr. Starr** thanked **Ms. Burford** for her enthusiasm and stated he is looking forward to the new range.
- **Vice Chair Schott** indicated he is a current member of the club in the Porkies and noted it was a former prison camp. The improvements are great for the area.
- **Chair Solka** thanked **Ms. Burford** for the update, stating it has been an agenda item for as long as he has been on the Council.

New Business

1. Lake Linden Flooding/Trail Status (Slides/Handout)

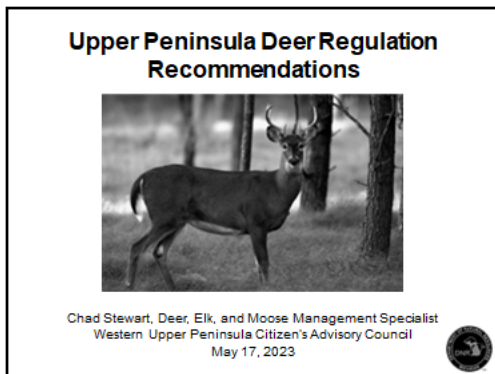
- **Mr. Yesney** was not able to be present, however, he provided an update for the Council. Pictorial slides of the on-site work in Lake Linden, project details and a progress report were shown on screen.
- The approximate 8-mile trail restoration project has been broken down into 6 bid packages to encourage contractors to bid on them. There are 171 work sites spread across these 6 bid packages.
- Categories of work include washout repair, grade naturalization and culvert replacement. There are a total of 102 culvert replacements.
- 3 bid packages have been awarded to contractors and work has already begun. 3 additional bid packages have just been awarded with work to begin June 1.
- All contracts have a substantial completion date of November 10, 2023.
- This corridor is scheduled to be open for the 2023/24 snowmobile season.
- **Mr. Lindquist** asked if FEMA is the major funding source. **Ms. Haughey** stated in addition to FEMA funding, an appropriation was also provided by the legislature. \$4 million from FEMA and \$3.3 million from the appropriation and department expenditures.
- **Vice Chair Schott** noted FEMA doesn't allow payment for more than what existed on site previously.
- **Chair Solka** noted a perspective on this project, indicating it resulted from a flood incident in 2018 and how long it takes a project like this to get to this point.

2. Michigamme Highlands Forest Legacy Project (Ms. Haughey)

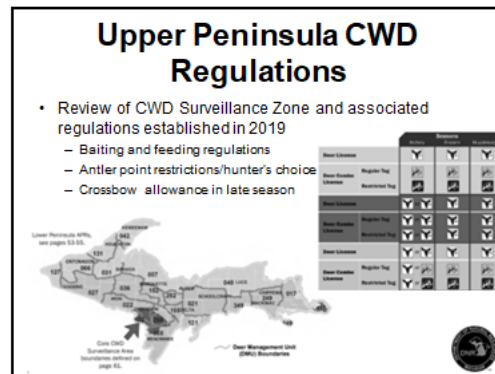
- The DNR, in collaboration with Lyme Timber, has been having engagement meetings with Baraga, Iron and Marquette County officials and stakeholders regarding a proposed Forest Legacy Program project that would place approximately 73,000 acres across these combined counties into a permanent working forest conservation easement. UP legislators and affected township officials have also been informed.
- This is a federal grant the DNR has applied for, and it looks promising. It is a working forest conservation easement in perpetuity that will provide both increased habitat and access.
- **Mr. Johnson** asked if there were any deer wintering complexes (DWC) included within this acreage. **Ms. Haughey** indicated there are 4,800 acres of DWC that will be protected. **Mr. Scullon**, lead in working to protect that area, stated there has been an agreement with Lyme Timber since 2010 in working with deer yards and they are carrying that language forward into this working agreement. The Wildlife Division and Fisheries Division are providing guidance.
- **Mr. Suchovsky** asked if property in the Menominee headwaters is being reviewed; **Mr. Scullon** stated he doesn't think so.
- **Mr. Lindquist** is hopeful that some tree species, such as hemlock, as well as wildlife can be protected in this agreement. **Mr. Scullon** indicated this project will have permanent access with operational guidance.
- **Mr. Dropps** asked for clarification on a working forest and how habitat is protected. **Ms. Haughey** and **Mr. Scullon** further explained; **Ms. Haughey** will provide additional information to him after the meeting.
- **Mr. Suchovsky** suggested adding the forest legacy program to a future agenda so the Council can learn more about it. He stated there are a number of steps to go through for this grant program and it is very competitive. **Ms. Haughey** mentioned there will be tours of the property scheduled during the day of the next WUPCAC on July 10 in Baraga and Ms. Kerry Heckman, DNR lead on the project, may be able to attend the meeting. She will keep the Council informed.
- **Mr. Vold** asked what the cost of the project is and if it is all federal dollars. **Ms. Haughey** indicated she is not sure of the amount and will respond back to him.
- **Chair Solka** asked that a map of the project be distributed to Council members.

3. Proposed UP Deer Regulations (For NRC Action in June) (Mr. Stewart)

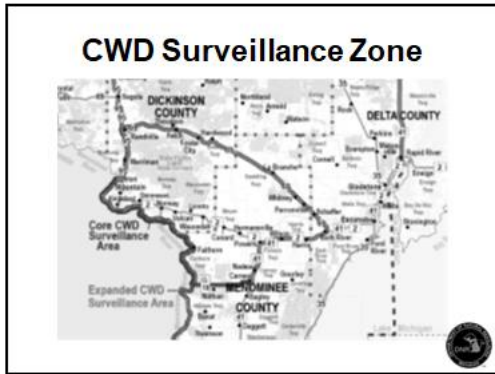
- **Mr. Chad Stewart** provided an overview of the proposed deer regulations that will affect the UP (see slides below) and answered Council questions.



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Removal of CWD Baiting/Feeding Ban in UP CWD Surveillance Zone

- CWD detected in 1 deer in 2018 in Southern Dickinson County
- Per CWD Response/Surveillance Plan, recommended removal of baiting/feeding
 - Also recommended by UP CWD Working Group

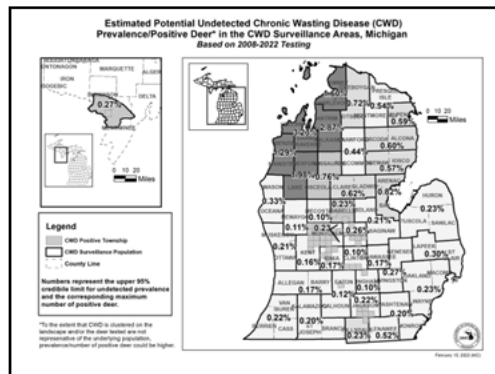
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CWD Surveillance since 2018

Year	Deer tested in UP Surveillance Zone
2018	668
2019	579
2020	331
2021	286
2022	234
Total:	2,098

No additional CWD positive animals detected

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CWD Surveillance since 2018

Year	Deer tested in UP Surveillance Zone
2018	668
2019	579
2020	331
2021	286
2022	234
Total:	2,098

While we did not reach our surveillance goals, our estimated potential CWD is low enough where we are recommending removing the baiting/feeding ban in the Core CWD surveillance zone.

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APRs within the CWD Surveillance Zone

- Recommendation to make entire area consistent with Hunter's Choice regulations (orange)
 - APRs for combination license buyers, but not deer license buyers

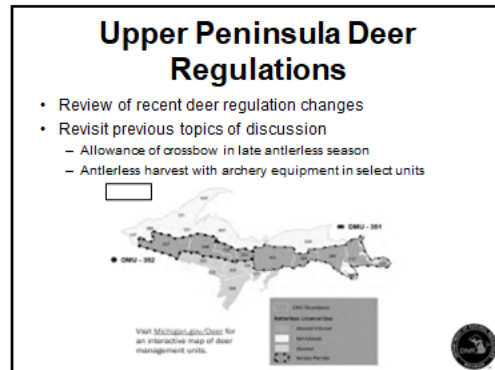
County	Deer License	Regular Tag	Combination Tag
Benzie	Y	Y	Y
Delta	Y	Y	Y
Emmet	Y	Y	Y
Dickinson	Y	Y	Y
Alcona	Y	Y	Y
Alcona	Y	Y	Y
Alcona	Y	Y	Y
Alcona	Y	Y	Y

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Antler Point Restrictions w/in the CWD Surveillance Zone

- APRs removed by Amendment 7 (July 2019), which included Hunter's Choice in parts of DMU's 022, 055, and 255, and APRs in most of DMU 122
- 63% of hunters support antler point restrictions in the Upper Peninsula (2014 Deer Hunter Survey)
 - Very little feedback after removal of APRs or requests to reinstate APRs in DMU 122
- Institute Hunter's Choice throughout CWD Surveillance Zone to maintain consistency with regulations across the UP


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Crossbows in late archery season

- Historically, prohibited throughout the Upper Peninsula's late archery season since crossbows became legal in Michigan archery season in 2009
- Was allowed in CWD surveillance zone as part of Amendment 7 of July, 2019
- Proposed to be included throughout the UP in November 2020
 - Rejected
- Needs addressed with regulations surrounding surveillance zone proposed to be removed




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2022 Late Archery Harvest by DMU (High Snowfall)

DMU	Late Archery Harvest	Total Archery Harvest	Total Harvest	Square Miles
007	12	314	1,554	1,788
031	14	143	931	818
042	4	36	345	798
048	6	91	580	2,023
066	1	70	484	866
127	0	44	203	328
131	1	46	343	538
Total	38	744	4,440	7,159

Late archery makes up: 5.1% of total archery harvest
0.86% of total harvest
1 deer for every 188 square miles




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2022 Late Archery Harvest by DMU (Mid Snowfall)

DMU	Late Archery Harvest	Total Archery Harvest	Total Harvest	Square Miles
027	11	127	768	1,237
036	6	108	615	987
152	10	142	588	386
252	4	84	418	297
021	40	314	1,313	1,464
349	37	111	402	468
249	17	100	427	859
017	25	216	811	792
117	10	89	233	135
Total	160	1,291	5,575	6,625


Late archery makes up: 12.4% of total archery harvest
2.9% of total harvest
1 deer every 41 square miles



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High Snowfall Area Closed to Antlerless Archery Harvest


- Historically have had no or minimal antlerless quotas
- In 2015, opportunity to take antlerless deer during archery season was removed after several successive severe winters.
 - Closed area totals 7,159 square miles
 - Average (2012-2014) of 1,275 antlerless deer taken during archery season in current area closed to antlerless harvest
 - 0.17 antlerless deer per square mile taken during archery season prior to closure
 - 2022 deer harvest: 4,193 antlered deer, 247 antlerless deer (94.4% antlered)
 - 23% of camps in 2022 UP Deer Camp Survey supportive of antlerless harvest opportunities in this zone



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2020 Season (DMU's 007 and 048)

- Antlerless opportunities with archery reinstated for 1 year
- Estimated 315 antlerless deer harvested this year
 - 3,811 square miles across both units
 - 0.8 deer per 10 square miles



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Radio-collared fawn births


16

Winter Severity 2022-23

17


2023 UP Harvest Prediction

*WSI through April 30 - subject to change due to May snowmelt



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Antlerless Quotas in mid-snowfall zone (No changes recommended)



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Mid Snowfall Zone (DMU 351 and 352)



- Antlerless quota of 1,000 across each unit established in 2021, distributed through lottery
 - DMU 351 (East) has 3,752 square miles
 - DMU 352 (West) has 2,907 square miles
- First year antlerless harvest estimates (2021)
 - DMU 351 decreased by 159
 - -0.04 antlerless deer/sq. mile
 - DMU 352 increased by 599
 - +0.21 antlerless deer/sq. mile



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Mid Snowfall Zone (DMU 351 and 352)

- In 2022, there were 2,000 successful applicants.
 - 713 individuals failed to claim their access permit
 - 107 additional individuals did not purchase an antlerless license
 - 1,180 valid license holders
 - 360 antlerless deer reported harvested with antlerless licenses
 - 30.5% success rate for valid hunters
 - 18% success rate for total quota



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Harvest by Antler Points, 2022



3 points on a side:

UP total-75.9%
NLP total-83.4%
SLP total-85.4%


Statewide total-84.0%



4 points on a side:


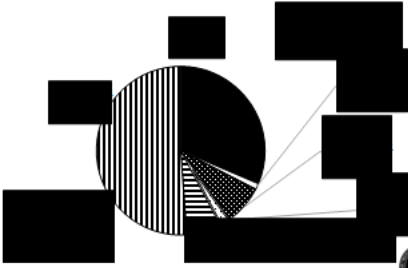
UP total-51.4%
NLP total-62.6%
SLP total-68.8%

Statewide total-65.6%



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Reported Deer Harvest, 2022



23


Liberty Hunt Harvest Composition, 2022

Liberty Harvest


78.1% Antlered Harvest
21.9% Antlerless Harvest

Worst ratio of any of our either sex seasons

Only 126 deer reported taken during Liberty hunt in the UP, 2022




■ Antlered □ Antlerless



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Proposed Amendments from May 11



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Amendments

- Make all "Specialty Hunts" (Liberty, Independence) antlerless only
- Allow the single deer license to be good for either antlered or antlerless deer harvest
- Allow the combination license good for one antlered and one antlerless deer, but not two antlered deer. Once a combo license has been filled and recorded with the DNR, an additional antlered deer tag may be purchased



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- **Mr. Johnson** asked for a copy of the presentation to be emailed to the Council; **Ms. Dahlstrom** will do so after the meeting.

Committee Activity

1. Committee Interest (Chair Solka)

- A slide showing all Council committees and current members was shown. Those wishing to be to be a part of one of the committees listed were added. Committees are informal, not required, and meet at the call of the lead person for the committee either by conference call or virtual format.

3. Fisheries (Mr. Dropps):

- **Mr. Dropps** reported the committee did not meet since the last meeting. He stated the committee is eternally optimistic and looks forward to working with the new fisheries chief to see how things play out before submitting any new resolutions.

4. Wildlife (Mr. Lindquist):

- **Mr. Lindquist** reported the committee met and prepared two resolutions for the Council's consideration. The resolutions were forwarded to the Council on May 10th for review prior to the meeting.
 - **Proposed Resolution #1 - Remove Special Regulations in the UP CWD Area:** **Mr. Lindquist** stated the resolution recommends the DNR along with the NRC remove all special deer regulations in the UP CWD area pertaining to CWD, restore DMU 122 to its former buck rules and make the CWD core area congruent with the surrounding regulations for that part of the UP. In addition, since deer cross back and forth from Wisconsin to the UP, the resolution recommends the DNR test for CWD all along the Wisconsin boarder to help keep the UP CWD-free. It is also recommended the DNR continue to educate hunters about not bringing back into Michigan any part of a cervid that contains spinal or brain tissue as per state law on importing carcasses of cervids to further prevent CWD from entering the UP. **Chair Solka called for a motion to approve Resolution #1. Mr. Johnson made a motion to approve, supported by Vice Chair Schott. Chair Solka called for a discussion. Mr. Lindquist** indicated the resolution is essentially endorsing what the DNR is already proposing to the NRC. **After discussion, Chair Solka called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.**
 - **Proposed Resolution #2 – Reduce the Daily Bag Limit on Ruffed Grouse in the UP from 5 to 3 Daily:** **Mr. Lindquist** summarized the resolution indicating the native Ruffed Grouse are under increased pressure from disease and hunting, there is increased ORV use in habitat areas, and unlike ringneck pheasants, Ruffed Grouse cannot be raised in captivity and released into the wild. A brief discussion took place regarding lack of support at the UP Sportsmen's Alliance (UPSA), the recent reintroduction of

the grouse survey with insufficient data to support the resolution, and the economic importance of this particular season. **Chair Solka called for a motion to approve Resolution #2. Mr. Williams made a motion to approve, supported by Mr. Lindquist. Chair Solka called for a discussion. Mr. Johnson** thought the Council needed a month to consider a resolution; **Ms. Haughey** indicated because the WUPCAC is an advisory body and according to its bylaws, at least 7 days notification is required. Thoughts from Council members were stated, including protecting this resource, efficiency of hunting, lack of available data, etc. **After discussion, Chair Solka called for a vote by a show of hands. The motion failed by a majority (5 in favor, 7 oppose).** **Chair Solka** thanked the committee for putting the work into this resolution.

Next Meeting

1. **Next Meeting Date:** **Chair Solka** noted the next meeting is scheduled for Monday, July 10th in Baraga at the Baraga Lakeside Inn beginning at 6:00pm ET/5:00pm CT.
2. **Items for Next WUPCAC Meeting Agenda:** **Chair Solka** indicated suggestions for topics, in addition to the themed topics of parks, boating and trails, for the next meeting can be submitted to him, Ms. Haughey or Ms. Dahlstrom. Suggested topics will be discussed at a pre-meeting with the Chair and DNR staff in June.

Public Comments (On Any Topic)

Chair Solka opened the floor for public comments on any topic.

1. Kathy Branz, Vulcan: Ms. Branz spoke about several items including herbicide treatment in a Red Pine planting area killing raspberry, blackberry and choke cherry bushes that people pick from and wildlife feed from; logging that occurred on and damaged River Road; a tornado last year that damaged a pit toilet and created many blown down trees at the DNR boating access site in Faithorn Township making the access site parking inaccessible. She stated as township clerk, she is receiving constant calls about these items. **Ms. Haughey** will have DNR staff from the Forest Resources Division and Parks & Recreation Division contact her regarding her concerns.
2. Tony Demboski, Quinnesec: Mr. Demboski indicated he serves on the UP Citizens' Advisory Council selection team and is happy to meet the new members. He noted his current and past service on the UPSA, UP Whitetails of Dickinson County, UP Bear Houndsmen and the local chapter of the Safari Club. He also spoke about the lack of deer this past season. He stated hunters no longer hunt in his area due to the lack of deer, which he believes to be due to the number of wolves in the area. **Chair Solka** thanked him for attending the meeting.

Closing Comments from the Council

Chair Solka opened the floor for closing comments from the Council:

1. **Mr. Lindquist** reported he spent the last week in the woods planting trees on his property and he noticed very little deer tracks. He is curious about fawn survival this year in the high snowfall areas.
2. **Mr. Dropps** stated UPSA is having a meeting on Saturday, May 20 at West Branch Sportsman's Club in Skandia. The negotiator who worked with the Tribes will be present to speak about the negotiations and netting. He encouraged everyone to attend.

Adjournment

Chair Solka thanked everyone for attending the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 8:28pm ET/7:28pm CT.