

Western Upper Peninsula Citizen Advisory Council (WUPCAC)

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, November 6, 2019

5:30-8:00pm Eastern

Bay College, JH University Center, Escanaba

Chairman: Phil Wirtanen Vice-Chairman: Warren Suchovsky

Council Members Present

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| Jim Baker | George Lindquist | Kirk Schott |
| Joan Duncan | Jim Lorensen | Skip Schulz |
| Dave Hall | Mary Peterson | Trevor St. John |
| Mike Holmes | Jake Putala | Warren Suchovsky |
| Dave Johnson | Horst Schmidt | |

Council Members Absent/Excused

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| Floyd Dropps | Chauncey Moran |
| Barb Gajewski | Travis Smith |
| Tom Solka | Phil Wirtanen |

Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Staff & Guests

Lt. Ryan Aho, Law Enforcement Division, Marquette
Zach Bishop, Parks & Recreation Division, Escanaba
Kristi Dahlstrom, Executive Division, Marquette
Stacy Haughey, UP Regional Coordinator, Executive Division, Marquette
George Madison, Fisheries Division, Baraga
Doug Rich, Parks & Recreation Division, Baraga
Tom Seablom, Forest Resources Division, Marquette
Karen Sexton, Wildlife Division, Escanaba

Call to Order

Vice Chair Suchovsky, in Chair Wirtanen's absence, called the meeting to order at 5:45pm Eastern and welcomed everyone in attendance. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Introduction of Council members were then made. **Mr. Lorensen** asked for a moment of silence in memory of Mr. Jason Truitt, a valued friend and employee of the Parks & Recreation Division at Wells State Park for the last 13 years.

Adoption of Agenda

Vice Chair Suchovsky asked the Council if there were any additions or revisions to the agenda. **Mr. Schulz** motioned to accept the agenda as presented; **Ms. Duncan** supported the motion. **Ayes: All. Nays: None. Absent: See attendance on page 1. Motion carried.**

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

Vice Chair Suchovsky asked if there were any changes to the July 2019 meeting minutes. None were brought forth. **Mr. Johnson** motioned to accept the minutes as submitted; **Mr. Putala** supported the motion. **Ayes: All. Nays: None. Absent: See attendance on page 1. Motion carried.**

Public Comment on Agenda Items Only

Vice Chair Suchovsky opened the floor for public comment on agenda items; none were brought forth.

DNR Reports from Division Staff

Written staff reports were provided to Council members on October 30, 2019. The following verbal updates were provided.

- **Stacy Haughey, UP Regional Coordinator:** Ms. Haughey welcomed everyone to the meeting. She stated House Bill 4687, which would reverse the baiting and feeding ban currently in place, has passed out of committee and passed in the House. This is only one step in the legislative process. It still would have to pass through the Senate and signed by the Governor before it could take effect. This has confused the public, who think the baiting and feeding ban has already been lifted. There is no change as of today. There is a good amount of science to back up the decision to have a baiting and feeding ban in place and the DNR stands behind the NRC's decision. Mr. Schmidt asked if it is signed into law by the Governor, will it take immediate effect; Ms. Haughey replied if that occurs, it would be immediate. Mr. Holmes noted the Governor can veto it completely based on the science. Ms. Haughey also mentioned that she attended the memorial services for former/retired Conservation Officer Bill Maycunich earlier today. CO Maycunich worked with her grandfather.
- **George Madison, Fisheries Division:** Mr. Madison indicated fall weather conditions have provided an opportunity for extra brook trout restocking from the Marquette hatchery in UP lakes, not streams, to help create a winter ice fishery. He will send out a list of the lakes to the Council. Mr. Holmes asked about Fisheries Order 205 which creates a 50-inch size limit in boundary waters. Mr. Madison replied it provides consistency with size limit on the lakes. He said there was no opposition voiced at public meetings such as the spring Coffee & Conversations sessions over the last two years. Mr. Holmes disagreed stating there were objections; he feels these regulations are only to appease Wisconsin. Mr. Madison stated there are several regulation differences between Michigan and Wisconsin on boundary waters, such as different seasons, size limits, bag limits, etc.; however, in 2018 when both met, it was agreed to increase more common regulations. Discussion ensued. Mr. Holmes stated Fisheries Order 206 also changes northern pike regulations on select waters in certain counties. Mr. Madison stated the fishing guide will have any new regulation changes marked in red. Mr. Schmidt asked what public input opportunities exist; Mr. Madison replied Coffee & Conversation sessions are held every spring, along with various public meetings on specific issues.
- **Tom Seablom, Forest Resources Division:** Mr. Seablom stated he did not have any additions to his report. Mr. St. John asked if any summer timber sales have gone to bid yet. Mr. Seablom replied a few and explained what a no-bid is for a timber sale and the process utilized. Mr. Lindquist asked about the demand. Mr. Seablom stated demand as well as prices have dropped. Vice Chair Suchovsky stated some of the China buyers did not attend this year.
- **Lt. Ryan Aho, Law Enforcement Division:** Lt. Aho provided a brief update on a several staff transfers within District 1. He also noted it has been a very busy fall and officers are gearing up for deer season.
- **Doug Rich, Parks & Recreation Division:** Mr. Rich stated as of October 1st, the start to a new fiscal year, several capital outlay projects received funding to move forward, such as critical culvert repair at the Porkies, ADA access at Bond Falls, Phase III at McLain State Park to move cabins out of harms way and the sewer system, storm water damage repair at several parks, water issues at Fort Wilkins, critical infrastructure repair at Cedar River, and construction at the Menominee River Railroad Dock boating access site. Mr. Schmidt asked if Oman Creek is holding up. Mr. Rich replied it is holding up and stated a meeting was held at Gogebic Community College for public input on the next phase. 95% of the design for the groin is done and will be submitted for permitting. Mr. Schmidt asked about shoreline erosion at McLain. Mr. Rich indicated they are looking to do additional armoring of the shoreline as part of Phase III. He encouraged members to drive through McLain to see the restructuring and improvements of the park. Mr. Schmidt asked about the status of funding for trails on M-26 in Houghton. Mr. Rich stated the trails section has been working diligently with FEMA coordinators on that project, indicating it will take 4-5 years to complete and cost millions of dollars to repair. Vice Chair

Suchovsky noted it appears the UP is in the early stage of an increasing amount of precipitation for both winter and summer months and asked if it is included in long-range planning. **Mr. Rich** stated they are having conversations and are utilizing scoring criteria to determine which projects and parks are priority when it comes to high water issues and erosion problems. **Mr. Schulz** mentioned the increased rain amounts this fall has thwarted trail signage by snowmobile clubs and some trails have had to be left alone to prevent more damage.

- **Karen Sexton, Wildlife Division:** **Ms. Sexton** stated her division report mentions a partnership with a local sportsman's group on a new public land pheasant hunting partnership in the UP. She noted this local group is speaking in opposition of the pheasant stamp. She indicated the latest information on the UP deer movement study was also included in the report and as **Ms. Haughey** mentioned earlier, as of the beginning of the fiscal year on October 1, 2019, that research project will not be funded at its full level. **Mr. Lindquist** asked about the deer currently collared. **Ms. Sexton** stated collared deer will continue to be monitored by staff as well as existing trail cameras. No additional collaring will occur. **Mr. Schulz** stated he heard there was another cougar sighting in Ontonagon and asked if it was confirmed. **Ms. Sexton** stated she's not familiar with the confirmations; however, she indicated staff have been responding to reports of cougars on trail cams and verifying them. On the DNR website, cougar sightings are reported by county. She stated they do their best to verify the sighting based on what tools are given to them (pics, tracks, etc.). She indicated this time of year tends to bring a lot of sightings due to the amount of trail cams in the woods with deer season approaching. **Mr. Lindquist** thanked Ms. Sexton for being on *Ask the DNR* earlier this week and asked if disease control permits are being granted in the core area. **Ms. Sexton** explained disease control permits are typically used outside of regular deer season; however, the positive CWD case was confirmed during the middle of archery season last year providing little option to adjust. She stated there are other options such as an increase in antlerless quotas, etc. **Vice Chair Suchovsky** asked about the status of CWD testing; **Ms. Sexton** stated hunter submissions are at approximately 50 with a total of 70 UP-wide.

Old Business

1. Proposed Marquette County Shooting Range Update: **Ms. Haughey** indicated this item is a standing agenda topic to provide updates throughout the process. She stated approval has been granted by Richmond Township; she thanked **Mr. Hall** for attending the township board meeting in support of the request. In September, a tentative agreement between the DNR and Cliffs was reached, and it was then sent to the Attorney General's (AG) office for review. Recommendations from the AG has been received and sent to Cliff's attorney for further review. As soon as the agreement is finalized, the building process can begin. She indicated Mr. John Pepin, deputy public information officer in Marquette, will put out a press release as soon as there is information to publish, and a public meeting will be held in the future. She stated if all goes well, opening would be in 2020.
2. UP Habitat Workgroup Update: **Mr. Lindquist** reported a meeting was held on October 8 in Ishpeming. The group has received a wildlife habitat grant for \$138,000 to do work on the deer wintering complexes. The group will be applying next year as well. There will be an insert in the UP deer camp survey mailed out if a property owner is interested in having work done on their property, they can mail it in. He indicated progress is going well. **Mr. Schmidt** asked what is being done to create habitat. **Mr. Lindquist** replied there are two different areas, one of which is to retain thermal cover for deer and the second is to create food sources. He stated there are plans drawn up for all of the deer wintering complexes across the UP. **Mr. Schmidt** asked about the cycle for habitat areas; **Mr. Lindquist** explained. **Vice Chair Suchovsky** stated that private industrial ownerships are an important aspect of these plans. **Mr. Lindquist** agreed, noting that most of the big landowners attend the meetings and are working with the group. **Mr. Schulz** asked who helped write the

grant. **Mr. Lindquist** replied Sustainable Resources in Crystal Falls wrote the grant and will help manage it. **Vice Chair Suchovsky** asked if funding is available immediately or after invoices are submitted. **Mr. Lindquist** stated there is a match, but the funding is available up front.

3. Current CWD Regulations & CWD Update: **Ms. Haughey** referenced the handout in the meeting packets and at the back table listing deer check stations available in the UP. She encouraged members to hand them out at local restaurants and establishments and spread the word to get deer tested for CWD. **Ms. Sexton** explained the avenues available for getting deer tested, which include 24-hour drop boxes (9 in the proximate area to the core) with a digital tag system. Deer check stations with staff will have the ability to pull the tissue needed for testing and they can work with individuals who are having their deer mounted. **Mr. Hall** asked about testing of roadkill deer. **Ms. Sexton** stated staff during their day-to-day activities are picking up roadkill for testing. She noted they have cooperated with some of the local county road commissions as well. She indicated if they are not receiving enough samples, alternatives may be considered. **Vice Chair Suchovsky** stated he seen in the local paper mention of a sick deer. **Ms. Sexton** stated offices receive phone calls reporting sick deer on a regular basis and explained a recent case in which a deer was acting extremely abnormal and it was discovered it had glaucoma. Discussion took place regarding the training of staff to take samples and the additional precautions needed in TB zones. **Ms. Sexton** stated the turnaround time for disease results is 30 days this year, due to the number of samples expected. **Mr. Holmes** asked about eating the meat. **Ms. Sexton** stated the CDC is recommending to not eat infected meat. **Dr. Schott** added there are no documented cases of a human becoming infected, but caution is suggested. Cooking does not kill the disease and gloves should be used when processing meat.

New Business

- Oak Wilt Status in the UP: **Mr. Bill Cook**, from the MSU Extension, was present to talk about oak wilt status in the UP and answer any questions the Council may have. He provided a handout on oak wilt. Currently, oak wilt exists in Dickinson and Iron Counties along the Menominee River. It has been there for the last 30 years, probably brought into the Shakey Lakes area from firewood. **Mr. Schmidt** asked how it can be treated. **Mr. Cook** stated the first step is to identify the distribution of the fungus underground in the root system and isolate it with a five-foot trench perimeter. There is a chemical treatment with limited success, but there is no science behind it. **Dr. Schott** asked if oak wilt is more common in red oaks versus white oaks. **Mr. Cook** replied yes, red oaks can die within 2-3 weeks, whereas white oaks will take 2-3 years. He explained that beetles fly around mid-April to July and recommended to not cut oaks during that time. He further explained how it's transported by the beetles. Once it is in an area, it will move in the root system from oak to oak until the trees die. The disease is moving northward and can affect young and old trees, sick or healthy trees. He explained what the beetles look like and provided an example of how to treat trees. He stated moving infected firewood causes much of the transfer of the disease. Discussion ensued on what infected trees look like, how trenches are dug and the life of spores. **Vice Chair Suchovsky** thanked Mr. Cook for presenting helpful information.
- Drone Footage of Thompson Fish Hatchery Renovations: **Mr. Madison** displayed a 20-second video of a drone flying over the new renovations at the Thompson Fish Hatchery near Manistique. He explained how the raising of walleye occurs (they have more fat on them because they are raised in the southern UP), and described the pond system, which uses well water, shown in the video. He stated staff are very thankful for the appropriation designated to build these new rearing ponds at the hatchery.
- Bear Season Update: **Ms. Sexton**, on behalf of Mr. Cody Norton, large carnivore specialist who is out of town, provided a brief bear season update. She stated there was an abundance of mass available in the woods this

year, although there was some inaccessibility with high water levels and poor weather. The harvest averaged out as season went on and in general, it is felt the harvest was good. A 600-pound bear was harvested out of the Carney bear management unit. The Amasa unit produced good-size bears in the 250 to 350-pound range. The Newberry unit had a lot of young bears. Being in the middle of the current regulation cycle, there will be no changes for the 2020 hunting season. The Bear Forum meeting will be held on December 7th in St. Ignace. **Mr. Schulz** asked if berry patches help bears. **Ms. Sexton** replied yes, berries have been very good in areas and soft mass has been plentiful 2-3 years in a row. **Mr. Lindquist** noticed at a Big Bay check station a list marked with who brought bears in, and out of 13 bears checked, only 1 was a UP hunter. He asked if there was a report on where bear hunters come from. **Ms. Sexton** stated that Mr. Norton may be able to speak to that question as she is not as familiar with tag selection statistics; she will have him respond. She believes there will be similar discussion at the Bear Forum meeting. **Vice Chair Suchovsky** asked if outfitters can set up a hunter on CFR land; **Lt. Aho**, after looking up the law, stated outfitters cannot guide on CFR land.

- Deer Season Update: **Ms. Sexton**, referring to a handout in the meeting packets, stated it is expected that most areas for harvest will be in line with the 20-year average. She stated the herd is still rebounding from the 20-year low in 2015 due to the severe winter of 2014. In regard to last winter's impact on fawn recruitment, the south central UP will fair well, but in the northern areas, it might have had a slight impact. She stated in 2018 there was a low percentage of harvest in the 1 ½ year old age class. How strong the 2 ½ year old age class comes in a check stations this season will determine if the winter had an impact on the 1 ½ year old age class. She noted this year is the last in a 3-year regulation cycle, despite CWD regulation changes. In summary, the check stations during archery season have seen some nice bucks and hunters seem happy so far. **Mr. Schulz** asked if archery season is up or down and if the number of archery hunters have decreased; **Ms. Sexton** stated season stats are not compiled yet and generally, license sales have decreased historically. **Ms. Haughey** added the nationwide trend is a yearly 2% decline. **Ms. Sexton** mentioned there was a survey that asked if individuals were an archery hunter and she could share those numbers. **Mr. Lindquist** said he looked at the survey results from last year and it seemed like the hunter numbers in the UP didn't drop as much as it has statewide. **Ms. Sexton** stated the UP is fairly consistent. **Vice Chair Suchovsky** asked if an update from the Michigan Wildlife Council be provided at a future meeting; **Ms. Haughey** stated she will gather information.

Reports from Committee Meetings Held

Vice Chair Suchovsky opened the floor for Committee reports.

1. Fisheries: **Mr. Dropps** was not present for a report. **Dr. Schott** indicated he attended a meeting in Mass City in which several sportsmen were in attendance.
2. Forestry: **Mr. St. John** reported there is no news from the committee. He did attend the Society of American Foresters meeting in which regeneration of deer browse was discussed. Deer browse is a different type of discussion below the bridge than it is in the UP.
3. Trails/Recreation/Law: **Mr. Lorensen** reported the committee meet an hour before the Council meeting this evening. Items of discussion included the CO academy beginning in July 2020, the sound enforcement program continuing this winter, and projects under way in the Parks & Recreation Division. In addition, a resolution will be presented to the Council at the next meeting endorsing projects at three state parks to make them either horse or ORV friendly. **Vice Chair Suchovsky** noted there is some work being done across the Menominee River in Marinette County where prominent signs on county roads have been installed indicating ATVs are welcome there.

4. **Wildlife:** **Mr. Lindquist** stated the committee has not met in some time and encouraged members to send any pressing issues to him and he'll schedule a meeting. He spoke about the legislative bill that just passed the House with regard to lifting the ban on baiting and feeding. He feels if this bill passes, it will negate Proposal G and the Scientific and Wildlife Management Act. He stated MUCC is against the bill. Discussion ensued regarding the issues that could result from passage.

Next Meeting

1. **Approval of 2020 Meeting Dates:** Members reviewed the proposed meeting dates and locations for 2020. **Mr. Putala motioned to accept the minutes as submitted; Mr. Lorensen supported the motion. Ayes: All. Nays: None. Absent: See attendance on page 1. Motion carried.**
2. **Next Meeting Date:** **Vice Chair Suchovsky** noted the next meeting, based on the approved meeting dates, will be Wednesday, January 15 at the Baraga Lakeside Inn in Baraga beginning at 5:30pm Eastern/4:30pm Central.
3. **Items for Next WUPCAC Meeting Agenda:** **Vice Chair Suchovsky** indicated suggestions for agenda topics based on discussion includes a deer season recap, a Michigan Wildlife Council update, statistics on bear location of harvest/residency, and review of a Trails Committee resolution for consideration.

Public Comments

Vice Chair Suchovsky opened the floor for public comment; none were brought forth.

Council Closing Comments

Vice Chair Suchovsky wished everyone good luck for deer season. No other comments were brought forth.

Adjournment

Vice Chair Suchovsky thanked everyone for their contributions. The meeting adjourned at 7:50pm Eastern.