

Western Upper Peninsula Citizen Advisory Council (WUPCAC)

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, September 17, 2020

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

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Chairman: Jim Lorenson - Vice-Chairman: Warren Suchovsky

Council Members Present

Floyd Dropps
Joan Duncan
Barb Gajewski
Mike Holmes

Dave Johnson
George Lindquist
Horst Schmidt
Kirk Schott

Trevor St. John
Warren Suchovsky

Council Members Absent/Excused

Jim Baker
Dave Hall
Jim Lorenson

Chauncey Moran
Mary Peterson
Skip Schulz

Travis Smith
Tom Solka

Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Staff & Guests

Kristi Dahlstrom, Executive Division, Marquette
Patrick Hanchin, Fisheries Division, Marquette
Stacy Haughey, UP Field Deputy, Executive Division, Marquette
George Madison, Fisheries Division, Baraga
Sgt. Mark Leadman, Law Enforcement Division, Marquette
Jessica Mistak, Fisheries Division, Escanaba
Doug Rich, Parks & Recreation Division, Baraga
JR Richardson, Natural Resources Commissioner, Marquette
Bill Scullon, Wildlife Division, Norway
Tom Seablom, Forest Resources Division, Marquette
Mike Smalligan, Forest Resources Division, Lansing
Kerry Wieber, Forest Resources Division, Gaylord
Ron Yesney, Parks & Recreation Division-UP Trails, Marquette

Welcome & Call to Order

At 6:30pm Eastern, **Ms. Haughey** welcomed everyone (31 total) to another WUPCAC meeting held virtually. She explained a few virtual housekeeping tips for the meeting and provided an overview of the Upper Peninsula Citizens' Advisory Councils (East and West). She displayed a listing of current West Council members and the group/interest and UP county they represent, stating she and the DNR appreciates all the Council members for their time and dedication, especially during these unique times of communication challenges. She then welcomed those who registered and joined the meeting, including NRC Commissioner JR Richardson from Ontonagon.

Vice Chair Suchovsky, on behalf of Chair Lorenson who could not attend due to a community meeting conflict, called the meeting to order at 6:40pm. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Adoption of Agenda

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

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

Vice Chair Suchovsky asked if there were any changes to the July 22, 2020 WUPCAC meeting minutes that were distributed to the Council via email for review. None were brought forth. **Mr. Johnson motioned to accept the minutes as submitted; Dr. Schott supported the motion. Ayes: All. Nays: None. Absent: See attendance on page 1. No further discussion. Motion carried.**

DNR Reports from Division Staff

Written staff reports were provided to Council members on September 10, 2020. The following verbal updates were provided.

- **Ms. Stacy Haughey, UP Field Deputy:** **Ms. Haughey** pointed out there are still unknowns going into the fall hunting seasons with regards to check stations and how those interactions will occur. She stated currently, some staff may return to work at office locations on November 1, which of course, can change at any time based on the pandemic. She indicated she heard at an interview last weekend that staff were not working remotely. While some staff have been granted the opportunity to work limited field work, others are conducting normal operations remotely. She noted the decision to open offices or allow staff back to work does not lie with the division or the DNR Director, it must be approved and decided upon by the Office of State Employer. She will continue to keep the Council informed. She also noted Wisconsin recently made an announcement of a do not eat advisory for the liver from deer harvested within five miles of the JCI/Tyco Fire Technology Center in Marinette. Michigan has had a similar do not eat advisory in place for several years through the Department of Health and Human Services relating to the concentration of chemicals in liver and kidneys as the filtering organs of the body. **Vice Chair Suchovsky** noted for the general public that the advisory in Wisconsin does not pertain to CWD or the CWD core area in the UP.
- **Mr. George Madison, Fisheries Division:** **Mr. Madison** added the Arctic grayling raised at the Oden Hatchery were brought to the Marquette Hatchery today in Harvey where they will be rearing them for production for 2-3 years. **Mr. Dropps** asked about the status of the party fishing proposal that was mentioned in the Fisheries Division report. **Mr. Madison** stated the proposal was reviewed by stakeholders, including the Citizens' Fish Advisory Committee, as well as a review committee and there wasn't overwhelming support for the proposal citing possible conflicts with brook trout regulations and enforcement issues. **Mr. Lindquist** asked if the grayling displaced other fish at the hatchery, noting the need to be separated, and if any of the grayling are expected to be planted in the UP. **Mr. Madison** stated the Marquette Hatchery has the capacity and production ability to raise these fish in an isolated facility to prevent cross-contact and without any reductions or displacement. He added there are plans to stock some of the fish in the UP using a set of criteria on what waters are considered appropriate with biological parameters and some candidate waters are being identified. **Mr. Holmes** asked if there is an update on the Paint River situation with muskies that migrated into the system. **Mr. Madison** stated he is not aware of the current status of the evaluation work that was going to occur.
- **Mr. Tom Seablom, Forest Resources Division:** **Mr. Seablom** added as of the date of the division report, there weren't any timber sales that had gone no bid; however, over the last few weeks, there have been a few sales without any bids, but then were picked up within a few days for minimum. He also noted the DNR has two dozen staff members, mostly from the Forest Resources Division, with various engines providing assistance on fires in the western states (primarily northern California, but also Arizona, Colorado, and Oregon).
- **Sgt. Mark Leadman, Law Enforcement Division:** **Sgt. Leadman** indicated he was filling in for Lt. Ryan Aho. He pointed out the good work by CO Lasanen for keeping the trails and waterways safer this season. He

referenced the Marquette County shooting range topic on the agenda, citing numerous groups up to 20-30 a day illegally use the gravel pits for target practice in the proposed area. He stated he is very happy to see that it may finally come to fruition and hopes that it can handle the vast number of people that will want to use it. He reported the youth hunt did not start out well statewide with two fatalities downstate in two separate incidents. He also touched on hunter safety classes and due to the coronavirus, most of the sportsman's groups are not hosting the classes. As a result, the Law Enforcement Division has set up numerous field days, whereas students can complete the entire hunter safety program online and then attend a 4-hour field day to complete the program. He noted field days being held in Ishpeming on September 19, Norway on September 20, Baraga on September 26, and Stephenson on September 27. Those interested can go to the hunter safety page on the DNR website.

- **Mr. Doug Rich, Parks & Recreation Division:** Mr. Rich added a few items to his report. He stated the 1042nd Engineering Battalion out of Gladstone will be coming back to the Porkies the first weekend in October to continue work on replacing a roof at the old headquarters. This type of successful readiness training for the National Guard has potential to become a statewide program. He stated the Friends of the Porkies' vigorous fundraising efforts, along with a partnership matching grant from the division, plus donated labor and volunteers, have resulted in a new playground to be installed at Union Bay Campground next spring. He also highlighted, with Ms. Haughey's assistance, a partnership with the City of Menominee to armor the popular Menominee River railroad dock access site. Finally, he mentioned he received news today the division received approval to move forward with the planning process to build an indoor public shooting range at the Lake Superior Sportsman's Club in Ontonagon beginning next spring. Funding was provided by the Natural Resources Trust Fund which leveraged Pittman Robertson dollars. **Commissioner Richardson** acknowledged the hard work put towards the project and what the commitment means to those in the western UP.
- **Mr. Ron Yesney, Parks & Recreation Division-UP Trails:** Mr. Yesney updated the group about the improvements being made on the Iron Ore Heritage trail along the shoreline in Marquette due to significant erosion. Funding was provided through the snowmobile program, the recreational improvement fund program and the Iron Belle Trail grant for the project which will be completed soon. The trail would not have survived another fall and winter. He thanked the folks at the Iron Ore Heritage Trail Association and UP Trails Coordinator Mr. Rob Katona for their work on that project. He also updated the group on new potential economic development funding opportunities being worked on for the Lake Linden grade which if successful, would allow that project to move forward. Engineering has been completed and construction will be moving forward next spring for the trail between Houghton and Chassell, which will bring some economic relief to those areas that have been impacted by the Father's Day flood in 2018. He noted several projects had been halted/stalled due to the pandemic, such as the 472-foot trestle on the Menominee River in Dickinson County and the trestle north of Baraga but are now able to move forward due to successful funding allocations for the projects. He stated ORV trails have been exceptionally popular this year and staff are looking at how they can be maintained more regularly, perhaps through a standardized grading process. As for non-motorized activity, he stated funding was approved for a mountain bike trail at Keweenaw Point and trail proposals were approved south of Norway for the Piers Gorge area mountain bike trail. There is also construction on a mountain bike trail in Delta County near the Days River pathway. **Ms. Gajewski** commended the Parks and Recreation and Law Divisions for handling the increased activity on the recreational systems and lakes recently and asked if staff are preparing for an increase in recreational use going into the fall and winter seasons. **Mr. Rich** stated he will be covering this topic later on in the agenda. **Mr. Yesney** indicated the trails plan is being updated this fall and the increased activity numbers will guide them in planning. He noted community meetings will be held as part of the update.

- **Mr. Bill Scullon, Wildlife Division:** Mr. Scullon stated staff have been preparing the GEMS (Grouse Enhanced Management Sites) across the region getting trees trimmed and the trails mowed despite work limitations during the pandemic. He provided an update on the waterfowl season, youth hunt weekend, bear season and the arrival of successful hunter patches being delayed. He also indicated furbearer registration is back on track after being delayed due to the pandemic, so those with 2019 otters can now bring them in for sealing. He reviewed details regarding deer check plans, which is awaiting approval from the Office of State Employer for safety precautions. The DNR is not able to hire temporary workers for deer checks this season and the approach to eliminate contact has created limited resources, resulting in check stations being curtailed dramatically. He indicated almost all UP check stations will be closed except from November 15-18 and for UP CWD core areas, check stations will be available November 1 by appointment. Norway and Escanaba are the only areas who will have drop boxes for heads for CWD monitoring. **Commissioner Richardson** asked if the DNR could ask for volunteers to assist with CWD collection. **Mr. Scullon** stated it's been asked and because of the circumstances, it is not being approved. **Ms. Haughey** added these decisions are not being made easily, noting that Michigan has tested more deer than any other state in the country. Michigan's testing accounts for more than a quarter of all the tests in the US. However, due to the circumstances, the approach will be different this year. **Mr. Scullon** stated staff are anxious to interact with sportspersons in the community despite the restrictions.

Mr. Lindquist stated he appreciates the field days law enforcement is conducting to get new people involved; however, he feels the DNR is missing the boat by not having offices open for people to buy licenses and to come and ask questions as retail outlets can't answer questions. He stated he understands the Governor's office has to give the okay for DNR buildings to be open but feels the DNR should push for it. He thinks it's an opportunity the DNR is missing out on connecting with future license buyers with the influx of those recreating during the pandemic. **Ms. Haughey** stated that although offices aren't physically open, anyone can call the offices and it's business as usual—questions will get answered in the same way either by the front desk staff or with a direct transfer to divisional staff. She stated staff have done very well under the current working conditions and being responsive to the public. Online license sales have increased to around 200% for those who have gone online to do so. She stated it may be different, but the DNR is still doing their best to connect and reach out to the public. The agency doesn't have control over these decisions which are decided in the upper levels of state government. **Mr. Lindquist** stated he mainly was referring to the public who don't know who to call and would typically just stop in to get their questions answered; he stated other businesses have made it work with safety in mind. **Ms. Haughey** replied the DNR is not the one making the decisions in this matter. When it is approved by the Governor's office that offices can re-open, plans have been completed and staff will be ready and prepared when that day comes. **Mr. Johnson** stated he agreed with Mr. Lindquist in that small businesses have managed to be open and go through all the steps needed and he wonders why the government hasn't done the same. **Mr. Lindquist** thanked Mr. Johnson for supporting his thoughts, reiterating his point that the DNR may be losing future license purchasers. **Mr. Dropps** reminded folks when purchasing a hunting license online to give plenty of time as tags are mailed to customers.

Public Comment on Agenda Items Only

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

Old Business

1. **Proposed Marquette County Shooting Range Update:** **Ms. Haughey** indicated she has waited at least 8 years to announce that both a signed agreement is in place and \$800,000 in funding is secured to build the first DNR

public shooting range in the UP. It will be located in Richmond Township of Marquette County on leased Cliffs property. She thanked Richmond Township, Cliffs, DNR staff and those in the public who worked through a long process and helped to make it happen. The shooting range area has had decades of active illegal shooting practice taking place and this is an opportunity to make it safe in a state-of-the-art environment. She stated there will be opportunities to do some clean-up of garbage in the area in the near future and if anyone is interested in volunteering, they can contact Ms. Dahlstrom. She indicated the range will have state-of-the-art sound abatement engineering, meet all EPA standards for containment and be fully accessible to the public. She thanked everyone for their support of the project. **Commissioner Richardson** congratulated DNR staff on the success of this project, stating he knows first-hand about the struggles and efforts put forth over the last several years.

2. Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) & Testing Update: **Mr. Scullon** provided an update on the plan for CWD testing in the UP during the pandemic. He indicated they will continue with target surveillance, explaining any calls to the DNR about a deer looking ill will be investigated and tested if needed. He stated the disease lab just recently opened back up from being closed down due to the pandemic. Staff in the lab were unable to do any of the diagnostic work over the past several months so there is a monumental backlog that needs to be processed. Once the backlog is cleared and MSU's incinerator is up and running after scheduled maintenance, new samples can begin to be sent again. He stated the focus will be on the core area and divisional core areas in southern Dickinson and Menominee Counties with an expectation to collect 1,900 samples in those areas. Check stations in Norway and Escanaba will be open as previously indicated as well as drop boxes that will be active for collection and checked frequently by staff. In summary, there will be a targeted surveillance across the region, core area surveillance during hunting season and a 100-sample service testing in Dickinson County only from November 15-18th. If a hunter would like his deer tested and is outside of the surveillance areas, the DNR is asking people to utilize private labs (fees involved)—the DNR website has information available that indicates the process for this. He added there are instructional resources available on the website for how to remove lymph nodes. He stated this is a dramatic change for staff and they understand it may cause frustration amongst hunters. Staff will work with the public the best they can within the pandemic limitations to get everyone through this process. **Mr. Lindquist** asked how many deer were tested in the core area last year. **Mr. Scullon** stated he didn't have the information handy but can get it to him after the meeting. **Mr. Lindquist** asked about the lymph nodes collected that are waiting to be sent to the lab. **Mr. Scullon** stated they were collected from crop damage harvested animals this past summer. Mr. Hoover, a member of the public, asked if the testing goal was a cumulative goal or a yearly goal and if cumulative, how long would it take to get to that number; **Mr. Scullon** stated yes, it is cumulative and initially it was thought to take 2-3 years but with the pandemic it may take longer and further explained. Mr. Hoover asked if testing will stop and baiting be reinstated once the goal is reached. **Mr. Scullon** stated the decision will be up to the ecologist or disease veterinarians and the NRC at that point.
3. UP Habitat Workgroup Update: **Mr. Lindquist** reported the group met on September 8, which is the first time since March. He stated the group discussed DNR personnel changes since last 2019, bylaw recommendations, an update on the grants they are working on, and the backlog of 28 landowners who would like their properties reviewed for a management plan as part of the deer wintering complex project. He stated he'd like to see more landowners involved. He noted the group is solid and continuing to move forward. **Mr. Johnson** added that he feels it's a good group but sees a hurdle in securing funding for the biologists and foresters time to go out and see what will lands will qualify since grants will not cover that. He stated it has been great to see sportsman's clubs chipping in. **Mr. Lindquist** hopes that more will consider it as SCI will see that as a supportive measure from local groups; they have been a large provider of funding for this project. **Commissioner**

Richardson stated part of his job is to lean on the DNR to fund this project as the group and funding supporters have done their homework to prove the job can be done. He indicated the DNR has been supportive and he is optimistic that they will continue to do so. He stated he thought the meeting went very well and he is proud of the work the group has accomplished to date. **Vice Chair Suchovsky** asked about the bylaw development that was mentioned and if the group is moving more towards being a nonprofit instead of a DNR committee. **Mr. Lindquist** stated he isn't sure of the motives behind developing bylaws as it wasn't stated at the meeting. He also added that UP Whitetails of Marquette County along with the conservation district and the Ruffed Grouse Society partnered with Lyme Timber in conducting a planting of trees and shrubs along skid trails and they are hoping to do it again this fall. He stated it's not a wintering complex but it is on a migration route and will benefit deer in the spring and fall. **Commissioner Richardson** stated he appreciates hearing of the collaboration occurring with big timber companies and that these types of projects benefit more than deer, such as partridges, squirrel, Kirkland warblers, etc.

New Business

1. Update of the Land Strategy: **Ms. Wieber** introduced herself as well as Ms. Jessica Mistak, stating both of them have been working on the update of the land strategy as part of a department team. **Ms. Wieber** started her presentation with a background and history of Michigan's public lands.
 - *State Land Overview*: DNR manages 4.6 million acres of public lands and 6.4 million acres of mineral rights on behalf of the residents of Michigan, most of which are in the state forest system (3.85 million acres). The remainder for the most part is made up through state park and recreation areas (363,000 acres) and state game and waterfowl areas (364,000 acres).
 - *How State Land was Acquired*: The majority of land came to the DNR through the tax reversion process (52% or 2.4 million acres) during the Depression Era in the 1920's mostly due to nonpayment of taxes. A lot of the land was clear cut before it came to the state and a significant acreage actually tax reverted multiple times when the state would sell it and it would end up tax reverting again, which is when the Department of Conservation decided to use that as a basis of the state forest system and is where it is today in addition to new land acquired through tax reversion. 26% of the land base was purchased with another 19% acquired through land exchanges. Smaller amounts of land were gifted or federal government land transfers.
 - *Public Land Strategy*: The strategy was required under Public Act 240 of 2012. The DNR sought a lot of input from stakeholders and an advisory council and submitted a proposed land strategy to the legislature for review and approval in July 2013, a year earlier than required. It was in legislature for about 5 years before it was approved and adopted by the Governor in 2018. The strategy provides the framework for DNR-managed public lands ownership. The current strategy (submitted in 2013) is required to be updated and submitted to the legislature by July 1, 2021 for their review and approval.
 - *2013 Land Strategy Implementation*: There are two main components to the implementation with the first being a project boundary review. The strategy called for a reduction of privately held inholdings by 1 million acres. They have not been reviewed since 2004. Ms. Mistak clarified that trails, water access sites, boating access sites, and facilities are outside of the boundaries and are not part of the boundary review. The internal review is in process and the external review is expected in November with the DNR Director's review and decision anticipated in December. **Mr. Johnson** asked how game purchased lands are being treated during this review. **Ms. Wieber** explained the project boundary reviews do not look at specific ownership from a fee perspective and may pertain more to the second component. The second component is a state land review. About 240,000 acres will be reviewed to determine classification as follows: retain, offer to local units of government or other conservation owner, offer for land exchange, or dispose. These are lands that are 200 acres or less in size and are blocks of land that due to an irregular

shape in DNR ownership have really extensive private public boundary interface making it difficult to be managed. Groups of 10 counties will be reviewed at a time with an internal review beginning this month. An external review for the first group of counties is expected in early 2021. This process will take a few years to complete. **Mr. Dropps** asked if there is any priority given to deer winter yards. **Ms. Wieber** stated when the project boundary review took place, deer winter yards were mapped and available to staff so they could include those as priority for the state to own. Getting back to **Mr. Johnson's** question, **Ms. Wieber** stated the funding source of the land is information the staff has available to them to determine if it is serving the intended purpose, if the land was purchased for a very specific reason. **Mr. Johnson** stated he found through the Upper Peninsula Sportsman's Association it's important to get in on the ground floor to look at the reviews; for example, it would be important for the UP Wildlife Habitat Workgroup to get involved prior to a public review. **Ms. Wieber** stated staff can certainly keep that in mind and she will bring this suggestion back to the planning group.

- *Land Strategy Update Process:* As mentioned previously, the 2013 strategy (approved in 2018) is currently being implemented, and now the Land Strategy must be updated. The DNR Director appointed a sprint team representing all divisions. They are charged with meeting the requirements of PA 240 of 2018 by creating an updated strategic plan by July 1, 2021. The team has completed an assessment of all of the components of the 2013 strategy for effectiveness and have evaluated the specific goals, strategies and measurable objectives to determine which to keep, modify or remove and why. This assessment is forming the foundation for developing the updated strategy for 2021. Draft components of the updated land strategy are being developed now based on the outcome of the assessment. A lot of engagement will occur through this entire process, both internally and externally, with stakeholders as well as members of the public.
- *Updated Land Strategy Focus:* The focus of the updated land strategy is to highlight the value of a robust public land base and to provide regional and statewide measurable goals, strategies and objectives. The DNR wants to inform and make sure there is good understanding both by the public and stakeholders on the insight of DNR land ownership and what the key actions will be for the next six years. Updated goals include protecting natural and cultural resources, providing access to outdoor public recreation opportunities and promoting responsible natural resource management. Each of these goals have specific strategies and measurable objectives under them and they will all be available for the public to review.
- *Process Timeline:* September/October 2020 are months of engagement: draft outline and land strategy components posted to www.michigan.gov/publiclands, virtual public meetings, regional facilitated stakeholder sessions, presentations at identified council and board meetings. November/December 2020- feedback and input incorporated and draft 2021 land strategy update developed. Comments are being accepted on the components that are posted now until October 31. In January/February 2021, the draft land strategy updated will be posted to www.michigan.gov/publiclands, final public and stakeholder input/review sessions will be held, and the last input will be incorporated into the final land strategy draft. In March/April 2021, final internal reviews will be conducted, and the land strategy update will be finalized. By May 1, the updated land strategy will be provided to relevant legislative committees and then by July 1, the updated land strategy and reports formally submitted to the legislature for their review.
- *Engagement Efforts:* **Ms. Wieber** indicated the team has focused on public and stakeholder engagement throughout the process with email notifications, press releases, social media, and a dedicated website (www.michigan.gov/publiclands) and email address (DNR-LandStrategy@michigan.gov) and facilitating sessions and virtual meetings and presentations to receive comments and feedback, which will be accepted through October 31.
- *Public Input:* An interactive map was created to encourage public participation asking people to "drop a tree" on the public lands they valued the most. They were then asked to take a brief, 3-question survey to

share why public lands matter to them. It was very non-scientific and used more as an engagement tool to get people interested in the project and in public lands. 718 people participated and it showed some good results. Three charts were shown listing the results of the 3 questions. Access for recreational opportunities was the winner in what was valued most about public lands. Over 86% of respondents indicated Michigan's public lands are extremely important to their quality of life and recreational activities. When asked what limitation prevented them from enjoying public land to the fullest extent possible, just over 40% (the highest answer) stated nothing limited them. This informal survey provided good insight for the update. **Ms. Wieber** encouraged Council members to go to the website and review what is posted and to provide public comment and feedback before October 31.

- **Questions:** **Ms. Wieber** opened the floor for Council questions.
 - **Vice Chair Suchovsky** asked if the forest legacy program can be another tool used to increase acreage for winter habitat complexes. **Ms. Wieber** stated the forest legacy program is focused more on protecting what's environmentally important and is usually larger blocks of land and may not fit the need for winter complexes. She explained the competitive nature of those funds as well. **Mr. Lindquist** stated it would be important to protect winter complexes so perhaps the program would fit well. **Ms. Wieber** stated there could be opportunities in protection through conservation easements. **Mr. Lindquist** also mentioned there were funds through the Natural Resources Trust Fund for winter complexes, but he's concerned the priority has changed and no requests have gone through because of the land cap. **Ms. Wieber** explained the land cap ended with the approval of Public Act 240 and with the updated land strategy, momentum is building again. She described the inactive eco regional fund grants and the future need for flexibility to be reactive when smaller tracts become available and are a right fit for those types of projects.
 - **Commissioner Richardson** asked if Ms. Wieber could send him a summary of what land was acquired through the eco regional fund grants for deer yards in the last 5-10 years so he can understand the process and perhaps help reinstate it as it would seem to work for current needs. **Ms. Wieber** stated she will send him a summary and added the grant process did work well and allowed the DNR to be mobile and react to lands becoming available that do not stay around long.
 - **Vice Chair Suchovsky** thanked Ms. Wieber for the presentation.

2. **School Forest Program:** **Vice Chair Suchovsky** stated the Council spoke about school forests at their last meeting and he suggested Mr. Smalligan attend to help the Council better understand how the program works. **Mr. Smalligan** thanked Vice Chair Suchovsky for inviting him to the meeting. He introduced himself as a forester with the DNR's Forest Resources Division who works with the Forest Stewardship Program helping private landowners in the state. He stated the program has five priorities: powered and educated landowners, accessible markets (helping landowners access the forest product market with foresters and loggers), clean water (showcasing the connections between forest management and water), certified forests (helping landowners certify their forest through the American Tree Farm system), Sustainable Forest Initiative (SFI) and Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), and finally school forests. He indicated hundreds of schools in Michigan own forests. Some of them are doing great things with their forests and many schools are underutilizing their forest or not utilizing it at all. The DNR does a lot of youth educational programming getting students out into the woods and the Forest Resources Division works with local schools and their forests. He stated he has funding from the US Forest Service to provide grants to schools so they can hire a professional forester to develop a Forest Stewardship Plan for their school forest. Currently, there are several dozen schools that are developing plans and learning more about their forest. He indicated his counterpart in the Traverse City office is the statewide coordinator for Project Learning Tree which is a good national program for teachers to receive training and outdoor education and is a really good curriculum for getting students outside in the forest to

learn about tress and all other kinds of forest related things. Other resources for local schools is Wheels to Woods which is a transportation grant that provides funding for schools to go on a field trip to any local public or private forest or forest products company. In the last four years of the program, 35,000 students have been able to get out into the woods on a field trip, and included 1,600 teachers, 5,000 parents, and 300 outdoor educators. They are very interested in helping rural schools in northern Michigan and the UP as well. Trout Creek and Escanaba have been doing some real cool field trips. It is exciting to get kids to learn and get excited about forest management and see the potential for jobs in natural resources as well. He described a proposal for a new grant with the US Forest Service to explore careers in natural resources. Other resources for schools and teachers are Arbor Day Tree Planting, DNR Visitor Centers, and the Academy of Natural Resources. He displayed the application form for the Wheels to Woods program and stated they try to make it easy to get funding. He spoke about the Sustainable Forestry Initiative, one of three forest certification programs, who puts out an activity book that showcases several fun activities related to forests. Lastly, he mentioned a school forest guidebook that was created to help teachers and administrators manage their forest. He noted several hundred schools in Michigan have a school forest because of the 1931 Municipal Forest Act which allowed the DNR to transfer surplus lands to local municipal governments, counties, cities, townships and schools. It is still a valid law on the books and if any school is interested in obtaining a school forest, there is still a legal means of obtaining land and he'd be happy to help them through the process. **Mr. Seablom** thanked Mr. Smalligan for attending this evening and providing this information, which would have been helpful to Council member Mr. Schulz who was not able to attend this evening. He offered to connect Mr. Smalligan with Mr. Schulz and Mr. Smith. **Commissioner Richardson** indicated he's networked with Mr. Smalligan through the Michigan Forest Products Council and SSI and he cannot say enough about the partnership in the education area and applauds the work. **Mr. Smalligan** thanked him and stated his job is to have a positive influence on private forest lands and training loggers is an important strategy to improve the good work happening out there in the woods. **Vice Chair Suchovsky** thanked Mr. Smalligan for the information provided.

3. Western UP State Park Update: **Mr. Rich** provided an overview of the park season this summer, noting since state parks opened back up in June after being closed in March/April/May, weekdays have been busy like normal weekends and weekends have been busy like holiday weekends. He stated the division budget, which is totally user-based funded, was projecting a 20% loss of revenue due to the late start to the season and the cancellation of most of the scheduled events. Aside from this initial expectation, the numbers have been off the charts. Statewide, state forest campgrounds are up 22% through August compared to 2019—in July, it was up only 5%, so it's been very busy. Bookings in August and September were up 52%. Campground reservations in August were up 45% alone. Typically, October and November are quiet months after harvest festival weekends, but this year, reservations are up 31%, which represent 13,234 camps. He noted all western UP units have doubled in their occupancy rates. Statewide, there was a projected 20% loss in June; however, it was 15% at the end of the July and less than 10% at the end of August, so the gap is being made up for those initial 3 months of being closed. He further described full reservations in parks not normally full, backups getting into Lake of the Clouds, overfull parking lots, running out of recreation passports, and numbers of people not having ever been to a state park before. The RV market and park concessionaires are having banner years as well. As a result of the huge increase in use, however, a few old park systems couldn't keep up with the number of people, so there have been issues with septic failures, electric issues, etc. Overall, the improvement in the funding gap is good news. He stated staff have been awesome, but they are tired having worked short-handed and long hours during this short but tremendously busy season.

Ms. Duncan asked about the ability to park her horse trailer at or near Van Riper State Park in order to ride and scout out some trails near the campground. She stated she has talked to several park staff and managers and

she can't seem to get an answer. **Mr. Rich** asked for clarification on the location and discussion ensued. He also noted the delay on the proposal of a horse campground in that location due to the pandemic. **Mr. Rich** stated he will contact Ms. Duncan to discuss the issue further and to determine if there would be parking available. **Ms. Haughey** stated she will add this topic to the next agenda as a follow-up item.

Mr. Rich, at Ms. Haughey's request, also spoke about the ballot proposal in this year's November election regarding changes to the Natural Resources Trust Fund and the Michigan State Park Endowment Fund. He stated he cannot advocate one way or another about the proposal but wanted to inform folks that it is on the ballot. Both funds are constitutionally protected, and it takes a ballot measure to make changes to them. He explained the proposed funding and allocation changes listed on the ballot and suggested that anyone interested in learning more should research it online.

4. Small Game, Waterfowl & Bear Season Projections: **Mr. Scullon** reviewed the season projections included in his written update submitted in the division reports for grouse, bear and deer indicating that most of them are preliminary as the official prescriptions are not yet available. He also offered outlooks on woodcock, turkey, squirrels and snowshoe hare. **Mr. Suchovsky** mentioned the corn crop is being devastated by bears this year. **Mr. Scullon** agreed that bears, not deer, have posed a significant problem with farmers this year.

Reports from Committee Meetings Held

Vice Chair Suchovsky opened the floor for Committee reports.

1. Fisheries: **Mr. Dropps** indicated the committee did not meet; however, he said three of members of the WUPCAC fisheries committee are serving on a subcommittee for fisheries with the NRC commissioners. **Commissioner Richardson** explained before he left the commission, he had put together a subcommittee through UPSA with stakeholder involvement and he wanted to re-engage that subcommittee now that he has returned. He indicated the first meeting was held on September 2nd and it went well. He reviewed what the group discussed at the meeting and stated he looks forward to continued engagement.
2. Forestry: **Mr. St. John** reported the committee did not meet prior to the meeting, and thanked Mr. Smalligan for attending and providing his presentation on school forests.
3. Trails/Recreation/Law: No report.
4. Wildlife: **Mr. Lindquist** stated there are two items for the committee to report on, the first being a response from the DNR on a resolution forwarded from the last meeting and second, a new resolution for the Council to consider. **Ms. Haughey** indicated the resolution response regarding online training session for elk drawing applicants stated the DNR agrees that an online training session is necessary for successful elk applications this year and in fact, a six-part video series consisting of elk management introduction, elk anatomy and bovine tuberculosis surveillance rules just to name a few. The response indicated hunters are able to complete the training session at their own pace and positive feedback has already been received. The DNR is currently exploring the best way to serve hunters for the reserved waterfowl hunt and sturgeon spearing. **Mr. Lindquist** stated he appreciates this response and all the work that has gone into it, but he feels there is one part that may have been missed and that's the request for this sort of thing to be available in future years as well, not just this year.

Mr. Lindquist moved on to the second item being a resolution from the committee recommending the DNR implement a moose management plan. He stated a similar resolution was prepared a few years back but was never voted on by the Council. The committee discussed it at their latest meeting and rewrote the resolution. He noted the only thing being done for moose is a moose count and monitoring of roadkill. He said the committee would like to see a plan developed, much like the ones for deer, bear, wolves, etc. He stated he was part of the former moose advisory team back in 2011 and one of the main recommendations of that team was to develop a moose management plan. **Vice Chair Suchovsky** asked the Council to consider the resolution. No questions were brought forth. **Mr. Lindquist motioned to approve the resolution as presented; Mr. Holmes supported the motion.** Discussion on the motion took place. **Mr. Dropps** asked what the goal is for a management plan. **Mr. Lindquist** stated the moose advisory team made a recommendation if the population grew at a certain rate, say 3%, then there would be a limited hunt with very specific plans, and up to that point the population was growing about 10% a year. But in his opinion, the wolf population began to grow exponentially, and the moose population growth dropped to about 2% a year. He stated a plan would look at increasing habitat and growing the herd just like any other species with plans. **Mr. Dropps** asked why the former resolution was dropped. **Mr. Lindquist** stated he wasn't sure, other than more information was requested, and it was never brought back again for consideration. **Being no further discussion, Vice Chair Suchovsky asked for a vote on the resolution. Ayes: All. Nays: None. Absent: See attendance on page 1. No further discussion. Motion carried.**

Mr. Lindquist also wanted to mention that he feels the deer regulations for next year should be something reviewed very soon as he has some real concerns and feels others do too. He believes the DNR is looking to bring changes on regulations for next year to the NRC in November with approval expected in December. He's not aware of any further public meetings about it. He asked the Council to review the proposed changes for next year and submit comments to the DNR as soon as possible. **Ms. Haughey** thanked Mr. Lindquist for bringing the matter up and indicated Council members should have received the invitation for the forums that were held to discuss the regulations for next year. **Commissioner Richardson** stated most all of the organizations are aware of the proposed recommendations and he appreciates any input brought forward. Being that the science behind the recommendations are fairly neutral, it comes down to a social aspect as well. He stated any input provided will be considered. **Mr. Lindquist** added that he feels the DNR is trying to fix something that isn't broken and further explained. **Mr. Scullon** stated DNR wildlife staff look at the regulations very carefully and they are very concerned in making recommendations that are not going to have negative impacts. He encouraged all hunters to voice any concerns they have and reach out to the commission if they need to. **Mr. Lindquist** feels most hunters aren't aware of the recommended changes. Mr. Hoover from Baraga County UP Whitetails in the audience stated his understanding for the November presentation to the NRC from the DNR was primarily driven by the recommendation to implement a mandatory deer check. **Ms. Haughey** stated she isn't sure if there was one specific reason and deferred the question to Mr. Scullon or Commissioner Richardson. **Mr. Scullon** stated the registration process was part of the recommendations to coincide with a new license system being implemented. **Commissioner Richardson** stated he would like to see how the deer season goes and what the deer camp reports stay. He encouraged everyone to review and weigh in. It's a healthy vetting process and the commission appreciates and considers all the input they receive.

Next Meeting

1. **Next Meeting Date:** **Vice Chair Suchovsky** noted the next meeting will be Tuesday, November 10th beginning at 6:30pm Eastern / 5:30pm Central, held virtually.

2. Items for Next WUPCAC Meeting Agenda: **Vice Chair Suchovsky** asked if there were any suggestions for the next agenda. **Mr. Schmidt** asked if it would be pertinent to have a review of the moose population and the status of them in the UP on the next agenda, and also since deer regulations are still an issue and complicated to understand, perhaps a review of them and how those decisions are made by the NRC would be beneficial. **Ms. Haughey** asked him if he was referring to 2021 regulations; **Mr. Schmidt** replied he wasn't referring to any specific timeframe. **Ms. Haughey** stated she will connect with him to provide the information he is looking for. **Vice Chair Suchovsky** also suggested an update on the forest action plan. **Vice Chair Suchovsky** stated any additional suggestions can be sent to Chair Lorenson, Ms. Haughey or Ms. Dahlstrom.

Public Comments

Vice Chair Suchovsky opened the floor for public comment:

1. *Jordan Hoover, Baraga County UP Whitetails (pre-registered)*: Mr. Hoover spoke about the growing concern in Baraga County regarding the continued withholding of archery doe tags. He stated he's reviewed evidence, talked to biologists, listened to NRC meetings and there seems to be mixed reasoning, and feels some of it is simply a social objection. He noted the snowfall consideration at the NRC as well and how Baraga County is split into 2 DMUs with one having archery doe tags and the other does not. **Mr. Lindquist** noted the NRC snowfall was thrown out. **Commissioner Richardson** stated he spoke with Mr. Hoover about his concerns and appreciated his input for the next round of regulations.

Council Closing Comments

Vice Chair Suchovsky opened the floor for Council comments; none were brought forth.

Adjournment

Vice Chair Suchovsky thanked everyone who participated and for their contributions. The meeting adjourned at 9:19pm Eastern.