

Western Upper Peninsula Citizen Advisory Council (WUPCAC)

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, September 22, 2021

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

Zoom & In-Person at Marquette Township Community Center, Marquette

Chairman: Jim Lorenson - Vice-Chairman: Warren Suchovsky

Council Members Present

Jim Baker	Mike Holmes	Kirk Schott
Erik Bessonon	Dave Johnson	Travis Smith
Floyd Dropps	George Lindquist	Tom Solka
Joan Duncan	Mary Peterson	Warren Suchovsky
Dave Hall	Horst Schmidt	

Council Members Absent/Excused

Barb Gajewski	Carol Mason Sherrill	Skip Schulz
Jim Lorenson	Chauncey Moran	

Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Staff & Guests

Lt. Ryan Aho, Law Enforcement Division, Crystal Falls
Kristi Dahlstrom, Executive Division, Marquette
Jared Duquette, Chief, Wildlife Division, Lansing
Stacy Haughey, UP Field Deputy, Executive Division, Marquette
Shannon Lott, Natural Resources Deputy, Lansing
George Madison, Fisheries Division, Baraga
John Pepin, Deputy Public Information Officer, Marquette
Doug Rich, Parks & Recreation Division, Baraga
Bill Scullon, Wildlife Division, Norway
Tom Seablom, Forest Resources Division, Marquette
Ron Yesney, UP Trails-Parks & Recreation Division, Marquette
Tom Weston, Licensing-Facilities & Operation Division, Lansing

Welcome & Call to Order

At 6:00pm Eastern, **Acting Chair Solka** called the meeting to order. He indicated he was asked to chair the meeting in the absence of Chair Lorenson who had another local meeting to attend and Vice Chair Suchovsky who could only attend virtually. He noted several members and staff are attending in-person and some are attending virtually. He led the Pledge of Allegiance. Introductions of those in attendance were made.

Adoption of Agenda

Acting Chair Solka asked the Council if there were any additions or revisions to the agenda. **Mr. Lindquist** asked to add an update on the solar development in Sands Township and the potential loss of recreation rights. **Acting Chair Solka** added the topic as #5 under New Business. **Mr. Johnson motioned to accept the agenda as amended; Mr. Hall supported the motion. Ayes: All. Nays: None. Absent: See page 1. No further discussion. Motion carried.**

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

Acting Chair Solka asked if there were any changes to the July 22, 2021, meeting minutes that were distributed to the Council via email for review. None were brought forth. **Mr. Hall motioned to accept the minutes as**

submitted; Mr. Lindquist supported the motion. Ayes: All. Nays: None. Absent: See page 1. No further discussion. Motion carried.

DNR Reports from Division Staff & Follow-Up from Last Meeting

Written staff reports were provided to Council members on September 15, 2021. The following brief updates were added:

1. **Ms. Stacy Haughey, UP Field Deputy:**
 - Mr. Trevor St. John resigned from the Council due to increased work responsibilities; a note of appreciation will be sent to him.
 - Recognized Ms. Dahlstrom for her efforts in testing and preparing for hybrid meetings.
 - Encouraged the Council to share the Division Reports with friends, sporting groups and other networks. The reports are an excellent summary of UP activities and staff put a lot of time and effort into them.
 - The Office of the State Employer who has been guiding telework deadlines for state employees extended remote work till October 31 (Update: As of 10/26/21, the DNR extended remote work until December 5). Customer service centers will still be open to the public Tuesdays through Thursdays weekly.
 - **Mr. Pag Egan** was introduced. Mr. Egan is a commissioner on the Michigan State Waterways Commission representing the UP. The Commission is an advisory board that works with the DNR on the use of dedicated funds, provided by boaters, for the acquisition, development and maintenance of public harbors and boating access sites, as well as certain locks and dams. He offered his assistance for any issues or improvements that arise or need attention. He answered a few questions from the Council.
2. **Mr. George Madison, Fisheries Division:** No additions to the written report.
 - **Mr. Dropps** asked if there was an update on the amendments to several fisheries orders being presented at the upcoming NRC meeting. **Mr. Madison** did not have any updates to share.
 - **Mr. Schott** asked about the Lake Gogebic Regulation meeting and if any resolutions came from that meeting. **Mr. Madison** explained the purpose of the meeting on September 15 and indicated two regulation changes, which were supported at the meeting, will be going to the NRC for information: removal of the 13" size limit on walleye and removal of the 24-inch size limit on northern pike. He further explained the fishery issues on Lake Gogebic throughout the years and indicated a walleye population assessment survey will be conducted in the spring of 2022.
3. **Mr. Tom Seablom, Forest Resources Division:** No additions to the written report.
4. **Lt. Ryan Aho, Law Enforcement Division:**
 - A large number of search and rescues occurred during this busy summer season due to folks not knowing their surroundings, which made rescues extremely difficult for emergency vehicles and staff in many cases. Lack of cell phone coverage in remote areas is also an issue.
5. **Mr. Doug Rich, Parks & Recreation Division:**
 - Summer season statistics will be presented to the Council at a future meeting.
 - The 65th search and rescue recently occurred at the Porkies, a sign of a super busy season.
6. **Mr. Bill Scullon, Wildlife Division:** No additions to the written report.
7. **Mr. Ron Yesney, Parks & Recreation Division-UP Trails:**
 - Two major infrastructure projects were completed last week: Multi-use Trail 2 into Wakefield project, which has taken 10 years to complete, and the Menominee River Bridge which is a partnership with Wisconsin; both are now open. Thanks goes to the western UP trails specialist for his work in completing those projects.
 - The Foster City bridge in Dickinson County was finished this week and will be open to traffic next week.

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- On the Houghton to Chassell grade, damaged by the 2018 storms, the Pilgrim River bridge was completed in August. Two washout areas remain to be repaired from later storms and should be completed before snow arrives. Once these are completed, the entire grade will finally be open.
 - **Mr. Schmidt** asked if the Dollar Bay to Lake Linden project will be started next summer. **Mr. Yesney** stated the project, which includes 63 culverts, is at 50% engineering and is expected to be bid out in 2022 in six separate projects to make it more manageable for construction companies.
 - **Acting Chair Solka** asked about a reference to a stateline trail/100-mile multi-use trail along the Wisconsin Border in the reports and where it is located as he is working on research project involving the Michigan/Wisconsin stateline boundaries. **Mr. Yesney** indicate it is the old Chicago Northwest railroad grade from the Gogebic range to the Menominee Range and to Escanaba.

Acting Chair Solka thanked DNR staff for their time spent preparing informative division reports and answering Council member questions.

Public Comment on Agenda Items Only

Acting Chair Solka noted there were no pre-registered public comments. He opened the floor to any other public comments pertaining to agenda items; none were brought forth.

Old Business

1. **UP Habitat Workgroup Update (Mr. Lindquist/Mr. Johnson/Mr. Scullon):**
 - A meeting was held today in Ishpeming; haven't met for some time.
 - Overview of workgroup, mission, charge, deliverables, goals, and funding/grant sources discussed.
 - Update on several habitat projects at deer wintering complexes.
 - Continue to advertise to and encourage private landowners to contact them to help with management plans.
 - UP Deer Winter Complex Treatment Planning Effort by Forest Resources & Wildlife Divisions handout developed (included in Council meeting packets).
 - Very productive meeting; made sure all are working in the same direction on same deliverables and same goals, clarified functionality of the group.
 - The next meeting is being planned for December.
2. **August/September Wolf Management Advisory Council Meeting (WMAC) Updates (Ms. Haughey):**
 - Council members were emailed information on September 15th regarding the population modeling data process that was questioned at the last WUPAC meeting. The email included a link to a presentation that clearly defines the process, which was provided at the September WMAC meeting and a link to watch the entire meeting as well. Hard copies of the presentation were made available to the Council.
 - The video of the meeting shows only the WMAC Council members; however, public attendees are present and the second hour of the video displays those that provided public comments.
 - The next meeting is tentatively October 11, 2021, in the western UP (location not yet determined).
3. **Acknowledgement of DNR Response to July Resolution re: Northern Pike 5 NMS Limit (Acting Chair Solka):**
 - A copy of the September 13, 2021 response by the DNR to the resolution passed at the July 22, 2021 WUPCAC meeting recommending the DNR consider changing the size and limit on northern pike was provided to the Council in advance.
 - In summary, the response provided a history of prior requests and consideration, and testing of those limits in size, and briefly indicated the DNR would not consider any changes at this time.

- **Mr. Dropps** provided a few comments on the reasoning behind the request which mainly dealt with the inability to survey all the lakes in a timely fashion. He feels the recommendation should still be considered.
- **Mr. Holmes** stated the committee knew the information in the acknowledgement prior to the recommendation being submitted. It is strictly a UP request and is supported by the Councils, UPSA and several sporting groups. Ultimately, it will be an NRC decision.
- **Mr. Johnson** added it would take the DNR 30 years to survey the lakes and then evaluate them to see if something could be done with the size limits.
- **Mr. Schmidt** stated he didn't see any rationale in the response on why the DNR doesn't want to change the current limits.
- **Mr. Madison** stated Chief Dexter pointed out aside from the CACs and UPSA, these concerns are not heard at any other public meetings in the UP including the spring coffee and conversation meetings. There is no demand for no minimum size limits as indicated. **Mr. Johnson** later added that UPSA represents about 50,000 sportsmen and women.

New Business

1. **DNR Update:** **Deputy Shannon Lott** introduced herself and indicated she is thrilled to be at her first WUPCAC meeting in the UP. She provided an update of several projects and initiatives within the DNR.
 - Several sprint teams have been established to address several issues and ideas of new DNR administration.
 - Climate Change Sprint Team: Working on solar arrays and selling carbon credits. A pilot project is in the Pigeon River Forest where the first set of credits was sold to DTE.
 - Renewable Energy Sprint Team: New solar arrays were installed at the Oden Fish Hatchery. Six hatcheries make up 20% of the DNR's total energy bill. The DNR is committed to the Michigan Climate Action Plan and will work to help make DNR facilities more energy efficient with solar arrays. The Governor is working to put charging stations across the state and many of them will be at DNR locations.
 - Mass Timber Sprint Team: The new Newberry Customer Service Center will be built out of mass timber and located in front of the current field office on M-123 in Newberry. It's another way to help in the carbon conversation. Different kiosks will be displayed along the road to Tahquamenon Falls State Park showcasing the forest products industry.
 - Lake Erie Sprint Team: A team is working with surrounding states on the algae bloom problem by building wetlands along the western Lake Erie coast that will filter 90% of the phosphorus coming from all the farms in Michigan and Ohio. First of its kind project.
 - Employee Engagement Sprint Team: This is a very important team to Deputy Lott. Surveys have occurred throughout all departments of the State. The DNR has the most champions which means people who want to live, work, play and stay here and don't want to leave the DNR. The DNR is committed to engaging with employees during the pandemic times.
 - The Governor's priority of a new state park in Flint will come to fruition. The cost for the new park is \$26.2 million, which will come from the recent \$250 million budget allocation earmarked for the state park system to make improvements to its 100-year-old infrastructure. The current cost to make all the necessary improvements is \$278 million so the budget allocation will make a large dent.
 - The Director is involved and spending a great deal of time on the Line 5 issue. He is also heavily involved in the current tribal negotiations for the consent decree.
 - Council questions:
 - **Mr. Schmidt** asked about checking carbon offsets. **Deputy Lott** explained growth rate of specific species and yield models to measure what could be sold in a given year. Over 300 monitoring sites are in the Pigeon River Forest alone.

- **Mr. Schmidt** also asked if the state receives special discounts or subsidies from using solar arrays. **Deputy Lott** stated no and explained the intricacies of working with the complicated system.
 - **Mr. Lindquist** asked what is being done to bring back more hemlock growth. **Mr. Seablom** explained the regeneration process of hemlock in the UP and different issues that can inhibit growth. He also stated there isn't a large market for hemlock, reducing the need to harvest it. **Mr. Scullon** stated generally, hemlock is conserved across the landscape. Discussion ensued about cutting of hemlock by other companies.
 - **Mr. Bessonon** asked if there was a gradual increase was built into the recreation passport fee. **Deputy Lott** replied increases are built into the statute and is related to inflation rates. An inflation adjustment is due to occur this fall.
2. Introduction of Wildlife Chief Mr. Jared Duquette: **Deputy Lott** introduced Chief Jared Duquette who hails from Illinois and previously spent time in the UP. **Chief Duquette** provided the following update:
- He began as Chief of Wildlife on November 30th during the pandemic and upholding communication with staff and building relationships during virtual times has been challenging.
 - He grew up in the Saginaw area and is a big deer and grouse hunter along with other animals. He also enjoys non-hunting activities such as hiking, biking, birding, and botanizing. He finds most constituents and staff have broad interests as well.
 - Undergrad at Central Michigan University; PhD at Ohio State University while working on the first phase of the Michigan predatory prey study. This study looked at a lot of the issues talked about in the UP and he looks forward to working with staff to learn from that information and using it to go forward. He is a strong advocate in adaptive management.
 - Michigan is seeing a decrease in hunters which is a national and global trend. Although marketing programs are heavily geared towards retaining and seeking new hunters, diversifying the division's financial portfolio needs to occur to prepare for the future. How can the division build more partnerships, obtain more funding, and gain more volunteer hours.
 - Other animals rely on deer wintering complexes, not just deer. Maybe there are other partnerships that can be brought to the table to help offset the funding needed.
 - A wildlife action coordinator was recently hired. The wildlife action plan has hundreds of species that have various stages of conservation need. The DNR is charged with being stewards of wildlife and there is an obligation to manage all those species as well. The division is looking at how game management can occur while at the same time upholding some of the declining populations of species in that plan. But more funding is needed to accomplish that.
 - The focus now is to build the division's workforce and having conversations to develop partnerships and the funding needed to move forward. Strengthening partnerships with other DNR divisions is also a priority, such as dam management, to accomplish mutual goals.
 - Council questions:
 - **Mr. Bessonon** suggested directing revenues from carbon credits to the Wildlife Division. **Deputy Lott** explained statute requirements for funding sources and the need to fund the ability to get DNR buildings off the grid.
 - **Mr. Lindquist** suggested a drive by the Forest Lake dam area as he would like to see it preserved for waterfowl that uses that area for habitat. **Chief Duquette** stated areas like that will be reviewed for management benefits on a case-by-case basis.
 - **Mr. Schmidt** asked if there were any PFAS concerns with the Lake Erie wetland project mentioned earlier. **Deputy Lott** indicated monitoring for all kinds of chemicals is taking place in that watershed, so when dealing with phosphorus, which is the largest one present, other chemicals may be captured in

the process as well. If there were high PFAS levels, it would trigger a notification and that has not occurred.

3. Forest Resources Division Update: **Mr. Seablom** presented an update on the following forestry topics:

- Baseline inventory data has just been completed and the model accuracy will start on the carbon project in the Pigeon River Forest.
- A land use permit was granted to an interested company to alter and start exploratory drilling to see how many panels can be installed at the solar project in Dickinson County at the Groveland mine tailings basin. This is preliminary and not set in stone.
- This season, several fire and equipment assisted with fires all over the country in Pennsylvania, Minnesota, Montana, Oregon, California, Idaho, and Manitoba. Legislation passed a few years ago has made it possible to respond to all hazards, and the DNR fire team is trained and qualified as an incident management team. A team assisted with the COVID response at a mass vaccination clinic at the Silver Dome along with Wildlife and Parks staff. Forestry staff not only manage the state's land, but also assists with these types of endeavors.
- State forest plan work is wrapping up this year statewide and is on track to hit established targets. The state forest management plan update is also continuing. The DNR partnered with a company (with 100 years of experience) to get a more accurate projection of how many acres can be harvested on a yearly basis. Once those rough numbers are completed the end of October, they'll be added into the plan and implementation will begin over the next few years.
- A new cedar research project is underway through MTU focusing mainly in Delta and Menominee Counties, but also a few locations on the east and west ends of the UP where there has been historical cedar cutting. The first part of this project will be completed in the next month or two.
- In conjunction with the Wildlife Division, work on a winter deer complex pilot project continues. One in the east UP and one in the west UP are being evaluated. A handout explaining the project is in the meeting packets.
- Several million dollars in the division's capital outlay budget needs to be spent by 2024. Primary projects include facility upgrades due to old infrastructure and road and bridge projects on forest roads. Bridges are very expensive; however, for one current pilot project, the DNR partnered with the Marquette County Road Commission to help save money. It is hopeful partnerships like this can continue for other mutual projects.
- This fall, a statewide inventory project will begin on all road infrastructure, including bridges and culverts located in the western UP. Through a partnership with Trout Unlimited, they are driving all the forest roads and marking bridges and culverts on a map and measuring water flow, etc. to aid in the project.
- The statewide land review is also continuing. Public meetings will be held for certain counties and advertised through a press release.
- Work has also begun to update the statewide land strategy, which setting to expire soon, even though the first one is just rolling out. The first one took longer to implement under Public Act 288. Internal meetings are occurring to review the proposals that came in from internal staff and external stakeholders on which roads should be open or closed.
- Council questions:
 - **Mr. Schmidt** asked if there was a demand for cedar. **Mr. Seablom** stated yes, but primary processing facilities are located in Menominee and Delta Counties. It is not cost effective to cut a lot of it in the northern areas and ship it down there. It's also a sensitive species, with it being beneficial for cedar paneling and mulch, but it also is an important winter thermal cover for deer.
 - **Mr. Bessonon** asked about the future of the pulp business in the UP. **Mr. Seablom** stated there are only two large mills left in the UP and they are owned by the same company. He believes there will

continue to be a future for pulp and paper in the UP. He explained the ups and downs of the industry in the UP over the last several years.

4. UP Small Game, Waterfowl, Bear & Deer Season Projections: **Mr. Scullon** presented projections for the following seasons:
- **Small Game**: Grouse season is open. People are seeing birds and from those reports, it is believed that the grouse numbers will be similar to last year. A grouse survey hasn't been done for a few years so information comes anecdotally from sister states. The survey may be restored next spring. This spring had reports that production improved on the landscape but overall survival over summer is not known. Woodcock nesting in the spring looked very well compared to last year.
 - **Turkey**: This has been a bumper crop year for turkeys. All early nesting birds did well, and a lot of birds are being seen on the landscape. Fall turkey season is now open and hunters should do well.
 - **Waterfowl**: Ducks and geese have been showing up in the last few days and others should be seen soon. Local duck production was very high. Banding quotas were exceeded in both management units in the UP. Migration patterns were explained.
 - **Bear**: The season has been open for a while. It is still early for check station data to be compiled, some stations are busy, and others aren't. Once the weather cools off, things will pick up. Acorn and apple production were decent, and it is anticipated that harvest numbers will be consistent as in previous years.
 - **Deer**: There are substantial changes to the division's approach to deer season this year. The 3-tiered system for the UP was explained: no antlerless permits in the northern snowfall zone, 1000 access permits for each DMU 351 and 352 in the mid-snowfall zone, and antlerless hunting is open in the south central UP zone. The antlerless application period for the mid-snowfall zone just ended. Due to the light winter season last year, it is expected that more deer will be seen. Antler development should also be better than last year due to a good growing season. As for the CWD core area, wildlife staff are still aggressively trying to obtain as many samples as possible. So far 150 heads have been collected from crop damage. People are encouraged to bring in samples from that area. This year, staff will be working with commercial processors for samples. The goal is 1,524 heads in the core surveillance area to get a clearer picture of the disease on the landscape. This is the third year of collection.
 - **Council questions**:
 - **Mr. Holmes** stated he is finding corn as high as \$18, and it's supposed to go higher. **Mr. Scullon** stated it's the highest price he has seen since the early 2000's and back then the turkey feeding programs couldn't be sustained as a result.
 - **Dr. Schott** stated he drove by the Settler's Co-Op in the west UP and there were more bears waiting to be checked than he had grouse in his cooler. **Mr. Scullon** stated a staff person assists the Co-Op because it is a high-volume area and an important check station.
 - **Mr. Horst** stated he heard the DNR was moving to counties rather than the entire state in terms of seeking out sources of CWD. **Mr. Scullon** stated there is a new risk management strategy with CWD; **Chief Duquette** explained the regional approach further.
 - **Mr. Dropps** asked if there were labs that people could send their own deer in to be checked. **Mr. Scullon** stated this year will be the same process as last year. Information is included on the website on where samples can be sent for a fee.
5. Additional Agenda Items Added by Council: The following topic was requested to be discussed by **Mr. Lindquist** during the approval of the agenda earlier in the meeting.
- *Establishment of a Solar Power Area in Sands Township (Marquette County) (Mr. Lindquist):*

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- Although he is a supporter of solar as he lives off the grid, **Mr. Lindquist** is concerned with the location of this proposed development on the Sands plains which is a highly used multi-use recreational area for ORVs, hiking, biking, horses, dirt bikes, snowmobiles, etc.
 - He stated initially the request indicated recreational use would remain open; however, the company is working with Cliffs to take 2400 acres out of the commercial forest program and then buy 1080 acres of that.
 - He believes this is a terrible location due to the high recreational use and it should not occur. He has maps of the area to share.
 - **Ms. Haughey** added the DNR has been having internal discussions about this project for several months. **Deputy Lott** and **Ms. Haughey** visited that area today. The request is a land transaction application. Once submitted, it will go through a very intensive review through the Land Exchange Review Committee by all divisions including local staff on the ground. The process takes about six months. Public input/comment is being taken now (DNR-SUPERIORSOLAR-comments@Michigan.gov) which was issued in a press release on 9/2/21. A public meeting will be held also as part of the review process.
 - The Council agreed to have this topic as an agenda item at the next meeting.

Reports from Committee Meetings Held

Acting Chair Solka opened the floor for reports from those Committees that held meetings.

1. Fisheries: **Mr. Dropps** mentioned a meeting was not held as the committee is waiting for a decision from the NRC on regulations related to resolutions put forth by the committee and approved by the Council.
2. Forestry: No report at this time.
3. Trails/Recreation/Law: No report at this time.
4. Wildlife: No report at this time.

Next Meeting

1. Next Meeting Date: **Acting Chair Solka** noted the next meeting will be in-person on Wednesday, November 3, 2021 beginning at 6:00pm Eastern / 5:00pm Central. The location will be determined at a later time.
2. Items for Next WUPCAC Meeting Agenda: **Acting Chair Solka** asked for any suggested topics for the next meeting be sent to him, Ms. Haughey or to Ms. Dahlstrom. **Mr. Besson** stated he'd like to be involved in a few subcommittees; **Ms. Dahlstrom** will follow-up.

Public Comments

Acting Chair Solka opened the floor for public comment on any topic; none were brought forward.

Council Closing Comments

Acting Chair Solka opened the floor for Council comments:

- **Mr. Hall** asked for a quick update on the proposed Marquette County shooting range. **Ms. Haughey** indicated there has been a slight delay in clearing the sight to allow for an archeological study; however, the funding is secure, and it is hoped the range will be built and completed next year.

- **Mr. Hall** asked about the DNR's involvement in clearing dead deer off the highway as several people in his community have asked about it. It poses a hazard to eagles who feed on these roadkill deer and the county doesn't respond in a timely fashion. **Ms. Haughey** stated the collection of roadkill deer on county roads is a county level decision and does not involve the DNR. She stated she has discussed this recently with a local road commission. She added collection on state trunklines are reimbursed by MDOT. This process was decided upon many years ago between a taskforce of multiple state agencies. She further explained the taskforce's findings and decision. **Mr. Hall** stated he suggested to those calling him to at least drag the deer off to the right of way so that eagles are not on the roadways. **Chief Duquette** indicated he will look into the division's communications to see how messaging can be helpful.

Adjournment

Acting Chair Solka thanked everyone who participated and for their contributions. He adjourned the meeting at 8:17pm Eastern/7:17pm Central.

Approved 11/3/2021