

MICHIGAN WILDLIFE COUNCIL
SEMIANNUAL REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE
Public Act 451 of 1994, Section 43532b(18)(b)

Approved by the Chair of the Michigan Wildlife Council on May 2, 2022.

The following is the semiannual report submitted to the Legislature documenting activities of the Michigan Wildlife Council (MWC or Council) for the first half of fiscal year 2022.

As mandated by 2013 PA 246, the mission of the MWC is to develop and implement, in conjunction with a third-party marketing or advertising agency, a comprehensive media-based public information program to promote the essential role sportsmen and sportswomen play in furthering conservation through wildlife management and to educate the public about hunting, fishing, and the taking of game. This includes educating the public that hunting and fishing are:

- Necessary for conservation and management of Michigan's natural resources
- A valued and integral part of the cultural heritage of this state
- An important part of the state's economy

The mission is funded by a \$1 surcharge on all Michigan base hunting and fishing licenses.

Hunting and fishing are significant economic drivers for Michigan. Combined, they generate \$11.2 billion for Michigan's economy every year and support 171,000 jobs, according to a [2019 study](#) released by the Michigan United Conservation Clubs in partnership with Michigan State University.

Michigan is No. 1 among Great Lakes states for jobs created from hunting and fishing purchases. In every region of the state, the number of positions created and supported by hunting and fishing puts the industry in the top 10% of job-creation industries. In addition, the industry contributes \$3.3 billion in salaries and wages to Michigan households and has a \$7.2 billion value-add to the state's gross domestic product.

The MWC has contracted with GÜD Marketing of Lansing to develop and implement a marketing campaign. Extensive research and a baseline survey of Michigan's residents conducted in 2015 were used to set the foundation for the Council's work. Every year, a subsequent survey is used to measure changes in understanding and to refine the objectives for the next year. The communications strategy implemented in 2021 was focused on delivering key campaign messages to the targeted audiences (ages 18-34, black Michiganders, Southeast Michigan, female, ages 35-54). The 2020 survey showed more room for growth with these groups than with the general population. In response, the Council invested more in targeted communications, custom imagery, and messaging for each audience.

During fall 2021, the Council focused messages on the benefits of hunting during a time when hunting was at the top of mind for key audiences. The council continued to use the fictitious character, "Annette," to help connect more closely with target audiences. Annette is portrayed by Zavia Ferguson and comes across as lighthearted and humorous, while delivering direct messages. Zavia enjoys fishing and embarked on her first hunting trip in fall 2021 with Beth Gruden (one of the Council members). Media tactics included digital video, digital display, paid social media, content marketing, and social influencers.

Multiple social influencers were enlisted to authentically reach specific audiences through Facebook and Instagram. The social influencers allowed the campaign to make more genuine

connections, which was evidenced by the viewers' comments on the posts.

The Thanksgiving holiday provided a great opportunity to promote the comeback of Michigan's wild turkey population. In support, an article about the turkey's revival in Michigan was published in the Detroit News and the Detroit Free Press, and the Council again sponsored the "Turkey Tom" balloon in America's Thanksgiving Day Parade in Detroit.

The Council continued to partner with media that reached hunters and anglers to deliver key messages. The Mike Avery Radio affiliation included monthly interviews, social media posts, and weekly radio spots. In addition, the Council teamed up with the Michigan United Conservation Club's (MUCC) Michigan Out-of-Doors Magazine, including a featured article and print ad in every issue. Furthermore, the Council joined with MUCC to publish content in TRACKS Magazine, a publication which highlights habitats, ecology, ecosystems, and conservation in Michigan and is delivered to select elementary and middle schools.

From October 1 through December 31, 2021, the campaign generated over 11,152,721 impressions and 2,538,011 engagements (clicks to websites, likes, shares, videos, and views).

In preparation for the 2022 campaign, a scientific, probability-based telephone survey was used to measure knowledge of Michigan residents, ages 18 and older, in December 2021 and January 2022. The survey found:

- 65% of Michiganders understand that human wildlife management is necessary for thriving wildlife populations, up from 39% in the baseline measure before the campaign started.
- More than 7 in 10 metro Detroit residents correctly identified hunting and fishing licenses as the source of funding for wildlife and wildlife management work.
- Approval of hunting and fishing in Michigan and among metro Detroit residents matches or exceeds national approval data. Hunting is at 83% approval. Fishing is at 90% approval.

Furthermore, the Council used virtual focus groups to measure how well the current campaign is received by targeted audiences. This qualitative study included adult residents of suburban and urban Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb counties. There were 5-7 people per focus group.

Topics discussed in the focus groups included:

- Awareness and reactions to the current MWC advertising, with an emphasis on appeal, believability, and relevance of the messaging.
- The MWC spokesperson in the ads ("Annette"), as well as review of a video featuring Detroit Lion Frank Ragnow.
- Review of relevant terminology.

Focus group discussions revealed:

- Annette's energy and enthusiasm helped to make the ads engaging.
- The lighthearted and humorous nature of the ads drew positive reaction.
- Hunting and fishing dollars as the largest funding source for wildlife management is still surprising to southeast Michigan residents.
- Economic impact messaging continues to be broadly appealing.
- Population control emerged as a more consistent reason to support hunting than in previous years.
- There is opportunity for a stronger call to action, to showcase more outdoor spaces, and speak to more conservation experts.

The first quarter of 2022 was spent completing research, reporting, and planning for the year ahead. The marketing campaign is scheduled to resume in May 2022.

To learn more about conservation efforts in Michigan, including how they benefit from hunting and fishing, visit the Michigan Wildlife Council at HereForMiOutdoors.org.

The current council includes:

Nick Buggia, (Chair) Mayville
Jason Garvon, Brimley
Ed Roy, Traverse City
Hank Stancato, Detroit
Kristin Phillips (Treasurer, DNR director's designee)
Brent Pike, Grand Haven
Beth Gruden, Perrinton
T. Elliot Shafer, Grosse Pointe Woods
Franklin Hayes, West Bloomfield

The MWC appreciates the Legislature's continued support and the opportunity to report on its activities since October 2021.

Respectfully,



Nicholas Buggia, Chair
Michigan Wildlife Council

In compliance with Section 43532b(18)(b) of PA 451 of 1994, the Michigan Wildlife Council provides the following summary of Fiscal Year 2022 expenditures for the Michigan Wildlife Management Public Education Subaccount that was created within the Game and Fish Protection Account.

Fiscal Year 2021-22 Expenditures for the Michigan Wildlife Council
(October 1, 2021 through March 31, 2022)

Expenditure Description	Amount
Research/Marketing/Creative/Media	\$617,800
<u>Administrative</u>	<u>1,200</u>
Total Expenditures	\$619,000

Michigan Wildlife Council Media Appearances

October 2021 – April 2022

Media Articles

[Frank Raganow's Recipe for Game Day](#)

October 26, 2021

[Brothers thankful for the comeback of the wild turkey in Michigan](#)

Detroit Free Press

November 10, 2021

[Brothers thankful for the comeback of the wild turkey in Michigan](#)

Detroit News

November 10, 2021

[Conservation Kitchen: Chef Max Hardy Prepares Venison Chili](#)

Michigan Chronicle

November 22, 2021

[A First-Ever Hunting Experience](#)

January 31, 2022