

**MINUTES**  
**NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION MEETING**  
**August 8, 2019**  
**MSU Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory**  
**4125 Beaumont Road, Lansing, MI 48910**

**Present for the Natural Resources Commission**

Vicki Pontz, chair  
John Walters  
Louise Klarr  
Keith Creagh  
Chris Tracy

**Present for Department Staff**

Peter Manning, legal counsel, Office of the Attorney General  
Dan Eichinger, DNR director  
Shannon Hanna, deputy director  
Brooke Parmalee, DNR legislative assistant  
Cheryl Nelson, NRC executive assistant

**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

**Chair Vicki Pontz** called the Natural Resources Commission (commission) meeting to order at 11:00 a.m.

**Commissioner Walters** made a motion requesting an immediate closed session of the commission to discuss Attorney-Client Privileged communication regarding the current scope of the commission's authorities and responsibilities, MOA # 19006. **Commissioner Klarr** seconded the motion. **Pontz** called for discussion, there being none, a vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously. The commission then immediately went into closed session.

The Committee of the Whole reconvened at 1:28 p.m.

**Director's Report**

**Law Enforcement Division (LED) Lifesaving Award**

Law Enforcement division chief **Gary Hagler** presented a lifesaving award to conservation officer (CO) **Ben Lasher** of St. Clair county for his response along with CO **Steve Converse**, who saved a suicidal woman from jumping off the bridge at Belle Isle. **Hagler** thanked CO **Lasher** and his wife for their sacrifices for the department and the citizens of Michigan.

**Parks and Recreation Division (PRD) Lifesaving Awards**

Parks and Recreation division chief **Ron Olson** presented lifesaving awards to ranger **Zachary Bierlein** of Holly recreation area for performing CPR for 10 minutes on an individual who had overdosed; **Andrew Lundborg** of Grand Haven state park for successfully rescuing a missing kite surfer; and **Nick Sparks** and **Chad Cook** of Sterling state park for rescuing a kayaker who had been overtaken by strong waves. **Olson** said that without the rapid response of these PRD employees, tragedy could have occurred. He was pleased to recognize them for their efforts.

### **Partner's in Conservation Award**

**Director Eichinger** described the Partner's in Conservation Awards, which are employee-nominated and given by the department and commission to individuals, groups, organizations and units of government for their volunteer service. Boy Scout Troop 645, of Harrison was chosen for their over twenty years of participation in the annual sturgeon watch on the Black river, **Stan Smith** assistant scoutmaster, accepted the award on behalf of the troop. Marketing and Outreach division chief **Kristin Phillips** shared that each year the troop sets up camp for the weekend and spends time as volunteer river monitors and conducts stream-side improvements. The future is bright for the sturgeon in the Black river because of groups like Troop 645 who are willing to put forth the effort to contribute to the cause.

### **Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Communications**

Marketing and Outreach chief **Kristin Phillips** shared the CWD Communications plan for the 2019 deer seasons, focusing on the department's goals and desired outcomes. **Phillips** also talked about the department's target audience, strategies, key messages, tactics and how the goals will be measured.

### **Michigan Bear Hunter's Association's Bear Patch Recognition**

Wildlife division chief **Russ Mason** and Michigan Bear Hunters Association's (MBHA) vice president **Mike Pedigo** presented the 2019 winning bear patch which was designed by **Annie J. Laurenz** of Wheeler. **Pedigo** shared the history of the bear patch cooperator's program, who is eligible to submit designs for the patches and what is done with the proceeds from the sale of the patches. **Eichinger** thanked **Pedigo** and MBHA for their partnership.

### **MUCC's 2019 Convention Update:**

**Amy Trotter**, executive director, presented the resolutions passed at MUCC's June 2019 annual convention, which is a culmination of their annual policy process. She also introduced MUCC board members present in the audience including: **Greg Peter, Jack and Judy VanRhee, Ron Burris, Chuck Hoover and Roger Calhoun**. **Trotter** summarized the 2019 passed, emergency, withdrawn and failed resolutions.

### **Antler Point Restrictions (APRs)/Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Experiment/Proposed Antlerless Harvest Goals**

Wildlife division's deer management specialist, **Chad Stewart** first introduced the department's new bear specialist, **Cody Norton** to the commission. Next **Stewart** shared the department's development of antlerless harvest goals for the APR experimental area of Mecosta, Montcalm and Ionia counties with the commission. This is an area where the commission is implementing an experimental APR regulation to help gauge the interaction between APRs and CWD. The antlerless harvest goals were developed in response to a request from the NRC. The goal established by the department is to harvest 1.1 antlerless deer for every antlered deer in the three counties. **Stewart** said that this would represent an increase of the current harvest of eight antlerless deer for every ten antlered deer in that area. Taking of antlerless deer aligns with the desire to manage deer at lower densities in CWD-affected areas.

### **Legislative Report**

**Director Eichinger** noted that the report was located in the commissioners' binders and would be posted on the commission's webpage after the day's meeting.

**Chair Pontz** made a request of the department by asking if they would be willing to work with the Attorney General's office to review existing policies and procedures and report back to the



commission with a recommendation, which would also include a review of the commission's subcommittees and their role and how they interact with the commission. **Director Eichinger** indicated that the department would conduct a review. **Pontz** requested a report on their recommendations at the November commission meeting.

#### **Committee Reports:**

**Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee:** **Commissioner Klarr** reported that the committee reviewed a general management plan for Maybury state park, heard a report on Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 8 of 2019, to establish hunting and trapping at Watkins Lake state park and county preserve. Former committee member **Jim Hendricks** was recognized for his service on MSPAC and MUCC presented a tribute to PRD chief **Olson** on Michigan's 100- year anniversary of state parks.

**NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries:** **Commissioner Klarr**, chairing for commissioner **Schlaybaugh** said that this committee received a fisheries update from chief **Dexter**, which included information on the Arctic grayling from Alaska; they are now at Oden fish hatchery where they will get extensive UV treatment before they are taken up to the Marquette hatchery for release in a couple of years. **Dr. Seth Herbst** presented a report on the upcoming proposed fisheries regulations changes. **Chief Mason** and PRD's **Nicole Toman** briefed the committee on Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 8 and **Dr. Kelly Straka** and **Al Stewart** gave an extensive presentation on Nile Virus in Grouse.

#### **PUBLIC APPEARANCES BEFORE THE NRC**

(**Brooke Parmalee** read the official timekeeping procedures and guidelines for the meeting's public appearances which began at 2:21 p.m.)

**Ed Beckley** had a complaint regarding the legality of USDA-Wildlife Services (USDA-WS) sharpshooters being allowed to hunt over bait in Jackson county. **Beckley** wants them ticketed and the commission talk to the director about allowing this to happen, can't have a law for one and not for all.

**Tom Loundsbury/Bob Walker** from United Sportsmen's Alliance out of the thumb area, noted that this group is against APRs in their area. He feels that it is a social issue and is not science-based. **Loundsbury** also shared how the United Sportsmen's Alliance was formed. At the time, a survey was taken in the thumb area and there was only a 36 percent support rate for APRs.

**Aalden Guilmette** spoke about Upper Peninsula (UP) deer hunting and the regulations passed. He said that he is disappointed in those regulations and feels that 95 percent of the deer herd in UP is protected. **Guilmette** said that the commission has ignored his requests to remove APRs and that the commission's decisions are bad for the UP. **Commissioner Creagh** reminded **Mr. Guilmette** that his comments have not fallen upon deaf ears, they would be looked at during the regular deer cycle regulations and that the regulations he is referring to were more specifically geared toward CWD management in the UP.

**Mike Thorman** came to thank the commission for working with the three bear hound groups. He noted that the three groups are about being on the side of the resource and conflict reduction. This change in the dates for the Liberty hunt gives the youth the opportunity to hunt the Liberty Hunt one weekend and the youth waterfowl the following, therefore guaranteeing



them two weeks of hunting with no hounds in the woods. **Thorman** concluded by saying that the bear hound groups are looking at the big picture and what is best for the entire hunting community.

**Richard Wilt**, past president of Commemorative Bucks of Michigan presented the commission the Commemorative Bucks Michigan big game records eleventh edition publication and the Buck Fax magazine featuring the 2018 hunting seasons for several big game and turkey species. **Wilt** said that the group was established in 1981 and that PA Act 145 of 2006 named them the official big game record-keepers in Michigan. **Chair Pontz** asked if they would be willing to brainstorm with the commission to partner on how to get hunters to take more antlerless deer. **Wilt** said that the commission would also be welcome at any of their board meetings to share their thoughts.

**Mel Smith**, Let em Go, Let em Grow, asked the department for a site to post antlerless goals as that will give hunters the opportunity to register their antlerless harvest for more accurate harvest numbers.

**Eddie Beckley IV** said that he is against bringing APRs into CWD counties and the use of bait by USDA-WS sharpshooters. **Chief Mason** followed up by addressing the use of bait by the sharpshooters; the procedure is to have bait spinner feeders and cameras that will allow the sharpshooters to surgically take a large number of deer in a certain disease area. When they are done and the deer have been taken, the bait spinners, bait and cameras are immediately removed.

**Jim Sweeney** said that the department's buck to doe numbers/ratios are meaningless in the CWD area when it comes to disease prevalence. It has no relationship to what the actual harvest numbers are in the CWD area. He said that the department's numbers are meaningless when it comes to disease prevention and disease prevalence. According to the numbers **Sweeney** provided, given that Mecosta and Ionia county numbers are similar to Montcalm, 13,000 antlerless deer need to be taken, well over the 9,000 rate provided earlier by the department. **Eichinger** invited **Chad Stewart** back to remind the commission of the numbers presented earlier on which the department is basing the antlerless quotas. **Stewart** indicated that there would be a decline in antlerless harvest in that area this year over 2018 due to protections. He said that a 1.1 ratio can be met by a decreased harvest, but he does not anticipate that happening. **Stewart** went on to add that overall 1.1 ratio will be low level floor that first year, where it would be sustained in year 2 and subsequent years, he has not seen that level of commitment elsewhere. Maintaining that 1.1 ratio is a trend they have not been able to see in other areas. **Creagh** added that the 1.1 ratio makes sense over time but does not seem to make sense for the first year; there should be a set number so there isn't a backslide in that first year, then look at the 1.1 ratio over time. To **Sweeney's** point, to not hit a target number the first year, there should be more of a concerted effort to shoot more antlerless deer, because there should be a reduction of bucks based on information received today. There should be a number in the first year that should be adaptable, not to be hard-wired in, or based on other antlerless goals set by the department. An initial number goal would seem to give certainty to the amount of the antlerless harvest for the first year.

**Martin Schindel** told the commission that he is angry that the USDA-WS sharpshooters have not been made to follow laws set forth for the hunting public. **Schindel** asked the commission to investigate these crimes, which he stated included illegal baiting, poaching, hunting/shooting from a moving vehicle, etc., that the USDA-WS has not been ticketed for. He asked for the

immediate resignation of the chair of the commission. He wanted answers, justice, and arrests made and punishment to the full extent of the law, as if USDA-WS were one of the general hunting community.

**Chair Vicki Pontz** adjourned the public appearances portion of the meeting at 3:33 p.m. and called to order the regular meeting of the commission at 3:34 p.m. She noted that all commissioners who were present at the Committee of the Whole were present for the regular meeting.

## **REGULAR MEETING OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION**

### **NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION FOR INFORMATION ONLY**

**Establish Hunting and Trapping at Watkins Lake State Park & County Preserve, Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 8 of 2019, FOR INFORMATION ONLY**

**Spawning Closures, Fisheries Order 204.20, FOR INFORMATION ONLY**

**Designated Trout Streams in Michigan, Fisheries Order 210.20, FOR INFORMATION ONLY**

**Sturgeon Regulations, Fisheries Order 240.19, FOR INFORMATION ONLY**

### **NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION – ACTION**

#### **Approval of Minutes, July 11, 2019, Natural Resources Commission Meeting**

**Commissioner Walters** made a motion that the minutes of the July 11, 2019, NRC meeting be approved. **Commissioner Tracy** supported the motion. **Pontz** called for discussion, there being none, a vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

### **DIRECTOR – ACTION**

**Pontz** listed the action items on the agenda, director **Eichinger** indicated that he would approve all items. The director did say that regarding item number 7; staff answered **Mr. Moran's** questions from last month and he will be signing that land transaction.

#### **Commissioner Reports**

**Commissioner Walters** attended a meeting regarding the sand trap management plan for the north branch of the Au Sable river, attend phase III project on the Pigeon river, North Branch foundation meeting and dinner in Lovells, and the QDMA meeting in Petoskey. He also did some fishing in Canada and in Washington.

**Commissioner Klarr** went to Hillsdale for an all-day invasive species workshop. She also went to Bellingham, WA for a month-long school that her family runs for mid-career conservationists teaching them market-based principles.

**Commissioner Creagh** attended the Oakland county opening of a new ORV park, he congratulated both department and Oakland county staff for their work on the great facility. He



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spent a few days camping in Charters state park, noting that there are some renovations getting underway and he kayaked in the Munising/Pictured Rocks area. He spent time on the Tart trail on the North connector, adding that Julie Clark is doing a great job and donations would be welcome. **Creagh** concluded by adding that he got in some blue gill fishing.

**Commissioner Tracy** spoke about the **Bob Gwizdz** article in the Michigan Outdoor News and encouraged all to read his article, *Disregard for science could be bad for deer*. In the article ending **Gwizdz** wrote that **Tracy** acquiesced in the final vote by voting for the passage of the order, indicating that it had to do with the politics of the commission and how effective Tracy will be going forward. **Tracy** appreciated the comments but wanted to set the record straight, politics had nothing to do with his vote, he agreed with 75-80 percent of items in the CWD Deer Regulations Amendment, because he didn't agree with some of the items, he still voted for it because he did agree with the majority of the amendment. He did thank **Gwizdz** for keeping these issues out there and keeping the commission transparent.

**Chair Pontz** spent time with some pheasant release enthusiasts and pheasant stamp supporters.

#### Next Meeting

**Chair Pontz** announced that the next meeting of the NRC is scheduled for Thursday, September 12, 2019, at Northern Michigan University's Ballroom, 1401 Presque Isle Ave., Marquette.

The committee meeting that day will be the NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries.

#### Adjournment

**Commissioner Tracy** made a motion to adjourn. **Commissioner Walters** supported the motion and the meeting was adjourned at 3:42 p.m.

  
Vicki J. Pontz, Chair

  
Daniel Eichinger, Director

DATE: 9-12-2019