MEMORANDUM TO THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

Subject: Antlerless Deer License Quotas 2017-2019
        Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 5 of 2017

Authority:

The Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451, authorizes the Director
and the Commission to issue orders to manage wild animals in this state.

Discussion and Background:

In an effort to stabilize deer regulations, reduce public confusion, and enhance communications,
the Natural Resources Commission (NRC) and Department agreed to begin a three-year
regulatory cycle in 2014. Maintaining consistent regulations for three years removes one
variable that may influence deer population trends (regulatory changes) and increases
opportunity available to evaluate impacts of regulation changes. It also increases the
opportunity to educate the public about the goals and methods of deer management, assess public
opinions and preferences, and aids law enforcement in achieving better rates of compliance.

Accordingly, the Department proposes that regulations set in 2017 remain in effect for three
years. The Department will continue to consult deer data during the off-cycle and updates will
be provided to the NRC if special circumstances warrant making changes outside of the three-
year cycle.

Public and Private Land Antlerless Deer License Quotas:

This amendment establishes the public land antlerless deer license quota and private land
antlerless deer license quota for each deer management unit (DMU). Compared to 2016 quotas,
the proposed antlerless deer license quotas for 2017-2019 would result in an increase in both
public and private land antlerless licenses in the Upper Peninsula (UP) and Northern Lower
Peninsula (NLP). The Southwest Lower Peninsula (SWLP) is proposed to have a net decrease in
public land antlerless licenses and a net increase in private land antlerless licenses. In the
Southeast Lower Peninsula (SELP), no change is proposed for public land antlerless licenses and
a net decrease is proposed for private land antlerless licenses. It is proposed that 1,350 (up from
zero licenses in 2016) public land antlerless licenses, and 9,100 private land antlerless licenses
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(up from 7,000 in 2016) be available in the UP. It is proposed that 37,500 public land antlerless licenses (up from 32,300 in 2016), and that a total of 126,700 private land antlerless licenses be available (up from 116,900 in 2016) in the NLP. It is proposed that 8,510 public land antlerless licenses (down from 8,600 in 2016), and that a total of 151,000 private land antlerless licenses be available (up from 145,500 in 2016) in the SWLP. It is proposed that 17,100 public land antlerless licenses be available (no change from 17,100 in 2016), and that a total of 146,000 private land antlerless licenses be available (down from 166,000 in 2016) in the SELP. Overall, these proposals would result in 6,460 more public land antlerless licenses and 3,600 fewer private land antlerless licenses available statewide during the 2017-2019 seasons in comparison to 2016.

The proposed increases reflect a response to milder winter conditions that have allowed deer populations to increase in many areas within Michigan’s northern regions. Changes in the SWLP reflect the desire for continued, incremental growth in non-chronic wasting disease (CWD) areas associated with the population decline occurring after the epizootic hemorrhagic disease (EHD) outbreak in 2012. The decreases proposed for the SELP reflect the desire to align antlerless license quotas with hunter demand.

Preliminary harvest estimates from the 2016 season were not yet available prior to submission of antlerless license quota proposals. However, to accompany 2017-2019 regulations proposals, field staff has prepared narrative documents reporting and analyzing multiple-year trends in data and deer management issues in each DMU. These documents are available separately for review to the NRC and will be available to the public soon. Summaries of conditions by management region are provided below.

Upper Peninsula Region:

Biological

The UP region varies significantly in capability of habitat to support deer, winter impacts on deer, predator populations, and other factors that influence deer numbers. The severe winters of 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 resulted in high snow depths and harsh winter conditions. These conditions left many areas of the UP with low deer numbers. Since that time, the deer herd has slowly begun to grow due to conservative regulations proposed by staff for the 2014-2016 cycle and the relatively mild to average winter conditions experienced over the last two years. For these reasons, most of the UP is proposed to be closed to antlerless licenses in order to continue encouraging deer populations to increase. A few units located in the southcentral UP where deer numbers tend to be higher and winter conditions are far less severe are proposed to have an increase in private land antlerless licenses and additional public land open for antlerless hunting opportunities.

Social

Units in which only one to two bucks are harvested per square mile tend to produce low deer sighting rates and hunter satisfaction, and antlerless harvest is generally highly restricted or unavailable in these areas. Deer Management Units in the south-central UP typically provide outstanding deer hunting with buck kills exceeding five per square mile. In these units,
antlerless licenses may be issued to manage the population and to provide additional recreational opportunity.

Economic

Even with the relatively mild winter conditions that have allowed deer numbers to rebound slightly, the Department still expects fewer concerns over agricultural crop damage and tree regeneration compared to historic averages, particularly among large commercial forest landowners. However, antlerless harvest opportunities will continue to be important in DMUs in the south-central UP to address agricultural crop damage and forest regeneration concerns.

Northern Lower Peninsula Region:

Biological

Winter is a major factor of deer populations in many areas of the NLP. The impacts of winter tend to lessen when moving north to south in the NLP. In addition, the deer numbers are driven more by resource availability. Over the last three years, the NLP has seen relatively mild winter conditions. This has led to increases in deer numbers across majority of the region. For this reason, the NLP is proposing an increase in many DMUs on both public and private land.

Social

Currently, there is a 3-point antler point restriction (APR) in 13 DMUs in the northwest Lower Peninsula. There is a current proposal outlined in Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 6 of 2017, Deer Management Assistance Permits and Antler Point Restrictions, to add an additional antler point restriction (APR) to DMU 487, the six-county unit managed primarily for bovine tuberculosis in the northeast Lower Peninsula. As part of these APRs, biologists are aiming to have at least a one:one harvest of bucks to does in order to achieve a more balanced buck to doe ratio in addition to keeping deer numbers low for disease management. Adequate quotas are necessary to achieve this goal, which may have a biological impact but has also been driven by hunter preference for implementing regulations to achieve a more satisfying deer hunting experience.

Economic

Issues with agricultural crop damage can be highly variable in the NLP, even within given DMUs. Distinct private and public land antlerless quotas and the availability of early and late antlerless seasons on private land provide the opportunity to make tools available to private landowners experiencing damage as a result primarily of concentrations of deer where numbers are not excessive overall. Economic impacts also result from the presence of bovine tuberculosis in the eastern NLP, and eradication efforts require continued availability of antlerless licenses in these DMUs.

Southwest and Southeast Lower Peninsula Region:

Biological

For approximately the past decade, deer population estimates and indices (including deer/vehicle collisions, crop damage complaints, and observations of deer by the hunting community and
field staff) in the southern Lower Peninsula have stabilized or declined. Department management efforts were intended to reduce deer densities throughout most of the region over this period, but some areas have also experienced repeated outbreaks of epizootic hemorrhagic disease (EHD) that have had greater impacts on localized deer populations, particularly in the SWLP. Thus, reduced quotas are being proposed in a number of DMUs, primarily in the SWLP, to stabilize or slow the decline in deer numbers.

Social

Based on comparison to antlerless license sales in years prior to creation of the large multi-county southern Michigan DMU 486 and during the 2013 season under the reconfigured DMUs, most proposed private land antlerless quotas are still expected to exceed hunter demand for the recreational opportunity offered through antlerless harvest. However, proposed quotas in several units are close to or slightly below past license sales figures, and so private land antlerless licenses could sell out in some areas before the end of the hunting season at these proposed quota levels.

Economic

Where local deer abundance continues to contribute to incidence of agricultural damage, additional antlerless harvest within DMUs otherwise constrained by antlerless quotas will be possible through field staff efforts to work with property owners to provide Deer Management Assistance Permits. An increasing number of suburban communities in which hunting is still feasible have taken advantage of this opportunity, and the Department is working statewide to more efficiently address these needs that are often driven by community concerns regarding economic impacts from deer browsing and deer-vehicle collisions.

Chronic Wasting Disease Response Measures:

Since the recent findings of CWD, as outlined in Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 4 of 2017, Deer Regulations, the Department proposes maintaining antlerless deer license quotas to continue aggressive surveillance outlined in the Michigan’s Surveillance and Response Plan for Chronic Wasting Disease of Free-Ranging and Privately-Owned Cervids. The Department proposes the following:

- Maintaining the current unlimited quotas in the core CWD area (DMU 333) with continued high availability of licenses (40,000 private land antlerless licenses and 2,000 public land antlerless licenses) in the CWD Management Zone (DMU 419).
- The addition of 200 public land antlerless licenses and 8,000 private land antlerless licenses in the core CWD area (DMU 359) and requiring surveillance around a captive cervid farm that submitted two CWD positive animals in January 2017.
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Relevant Divisions have contributed to the preparation of this order. This order was submitted for information on June 8, 2017, at the Natural Resources Commission meeting. This item appeared on the Department’s May 2017 calendar and may be eligible for approval on July 13, 2017.

Russ Mason, Ph.D., Chief
Wildlife Division

William O'Neill, Chief
Forest Resources Division

James Dexter, Chief
Fisheries Division

Gary Hagler, Chief
Law Enforcement Division

Ronald A. Olson, Chief
Parks and Recreation Division

William E. Moritz, Ph.D.
Natural Resources Deputy

I have analyzed and discussed these recommendations with staff and concur as to matters over which the Director has authority.

Keith Creagh, Director

Date 7/13/17
WILDLIFE CONSERVATION ORDER

Amendment No. 5 of 2017

By authority conferred on the Natural Resources Commission and the Director of the Department of Natural Resources by sections 40107 and 40113a of 1994 PA 451, MCL 324.40107 and 324.40113a, it is ordered that effective July 14, 2017, the following section(s) of the Wildlife Conservation Order shall read as follows:

3.105 Antlerless-only license quotas.

Sec. 3.105 (1) The director in consultation with and concurrence with the natural resources commission may make appropriate minor changes to antlerless deer quotas established in 3.105(2) to meet disease control, population goal, or other management objectives.

(2) Notwithstanding any other provision of this section, the antlerless deer license quotas are as shown in table 3.

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*License quotas for these individual units are reflected as part of multi-county units.

**Public land license quota for these individual units are issued locally as permits for special deer hunts.

***License quotas for these units located in the Core CWD Area are unlimited due to active disease surveillance protocols.

Issued on this 13th day of July 2017.

Approved as to matters over which the Natural Resources Commission has authority.

John Matonich, Chairman
Natural Resources Commission

Approved as to matters over which the Director has authority.

Keith Creagh
Director
MEMORANDUM TO THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

Subject: Deer Management Assistance Permits and Antler Point Restrictions
Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 6 of 2017

Authority:

The Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451, authorizes the Director and the Commission to issue orders to manage wild animals in this state.

Discussion and Background:

The Natural Resources Commission (NRC) reviewed and discussed the “for information” version of Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 4 of 2017 regarding deer regulations during their May 11, 2017, regularly scheduled meeting. Several topics generated a high level of feedback and discussion including:

- The Deer Management Assistance Permit (DMAP) five-county pilot area
- Antler Point Restriction regulations for various Deer Management Units (DMUs) within the state

In order to allow for additional discussion and public feedback, these topics have been removed from the “for action” version of Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 4 of 2017 which is now up for approval and are proposed “for information” in Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 6 of 2017.

Deer Management Assistance Permit Regulations:

Sunset Provision

Deer Management Assistance Permit (DMAP) Regulations (Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 10 of 2014) established a three-year pilot program with a 2017 sunset clause in Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Grand Traverse, and Leelanau counties. Qualifying landowners within these DMAP pilot program counties were permitted to use firearms during portions of the early archery season for deer under the following conditions:
A Department inspection finds that there is a crop-damage issue that may be controlled through the immediate removal of deer;

There are factors, such as size of field and time of year, that effectively preclude archery hunting or available tools, such as Deer Damage Shooting permits, that have previously been used to discourage deer from damaging crops during the growing season;

The landowner agrees that there will be no shooting from October 1 through October 4 and from November 10 to November 14; and

The landowner includes method of take in the annual report provided to the Department.

Detailed criteria regarding the provisions for the pilot program are published in the DMAP Decision Tree.

The Department has evaluated the pilot program and proposes to remove the sunset clause. After examining the impacts of the pilot area change and working with stakeholders, the Department proposed changes to the Natural Resources Commission on May 11, 2017, as part of Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 4 of 2017. As the result of discussion and feedback at the meeting from commissioners, the Department has modified recommendations included in this order as follows:

- Remove the ability to permit the use of firearms during the archery season except for the period of October 1 through October 14.
- Leave all inspection requirements to the discretion of the wildlife regional supervisors. In addition to the provisions in this order, exception criteria shall be as published in the DMAP decision tree.

**Issues Pros and Cons**

Landowners most frequently request DMAPs in the Lower Peninsula (LP) where there is a longer agricultural growing season and the ability to raise a diverse range of crops. Deer populations in the LP also tend to be higher than the Upper Peninsula (UP), with increased annual survival and reproductive output due to improved fitness levels associated with less severe winters and availability of high nutritional forage. Allowing qualifying landowners statewide to use firearms during the first two weeks of archery season for deer allows for reduced agricultural and horticultural damage.

The Department has received feedback from landowners in the pilot area regarding method of take with DMAPs and have indicated that they feel they are able to adequately protect their agricultural interests with the use of a firearm during the first two weeks of archery season, which is congruent with the October 1 through October 14 firearm exception rule throughout the rest of the state.

Some hunters and hunting organizations indicated to the Department that they were concerned that firearm deer hunting under DMAPs during archery season may cause interference with hunters using archery methods in nearby areas. In addition, the Department and NRC also received feedback regarding potential archery deer season safety issues. During this season, archery hunters are not required to wear hunter orange and are often in camouflage clothing and blinds. Archery hunters may not be visible to landowners using firearms on nearby property
during archery season. During the 2014-2017 evaluation period, there was no documented increase in hunting casualty incidents. There was an increase in the number of complaints made to local law enforcement due to the use of firearms during the archery season but complaints were resolved when officers confirmed that those utilizing the firearms were permitted to do so.

Other States

The Department polled natural resources professionals in Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, and Wisconsin to see if their states allow firearm use with DMAPs (or similar permits) during the archery season.

- Illinois: Yes; special deer removal permits may be authorized any time except during the regular firearm deer season.
- Indiana: Yes; Indiana has the authority to issue permits during deer hunting seasons. However, in practice, Indiana has never actually issued permits during the hunting seasons where hunting is open and able to occur.
- Ohio: Yes; if the landowner has crops in the field and damage is occurring then their permit remains valid, at least until the end of the year. Truck crops, orchards, and nurseries would account for most of the permits that are valid during the archery season.
- Kentucky, Minnesota, Missouri, and Wisconsin: Yes; these states have authority to issue permits to use firearms during archery season. However, in practice, the permits are only issued on a case-by-case basis and, especially in Kentucky and Minnesota, extraordinary circumstances and site visits are required.
- Nebraska and North Dakota: No.

Biological

The number of deer that are taken with DMAPs each year, regardless of method of take, is not expected to adversely impact the population of the species.

Social

During the 2014-2017 evaluation period, 3,108 deer were harvested using DMAPs in the five-county area and of that, 316 deer were harvested using a firearm during archery season.

Economic

The Department does not expect any significant budgetary or personnel implications.

Taking Antlered Deer

Current regulations allow for the take of one antlered deer with a DMAP on lands within the pilot program area when the following conditions are met:

- An inspection by Department personnel finds that an antlered deer is causing acute damage by removing bark through antler rubbing on agricultural or horticultural trees, shrubs, or vines multiple times during a week; and
- The landowner has used barriers or other methods (e.g., fencing or tree wraps) to prevent antlered deer damage to agricultural or horticultural trees, shrubs, or vines. The inspection shows these methods have not been effective in eliminating damage.
All antlered deer harvested with a DMAP must be submitted, including antlers, to the Department within 72 hours of harvest.

Currently, there is no mechanism available to take bucks that are protected under an antler point restriction (APR) during an open deer season and causing damage. The Department proposed changes for allowing the take of antlered deer statewide with a DMAP to the NRC on May 11, 2017 as part of Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 4 of 2017. As the result of discussion and feedback at the meeting from commissioners, the Department has modified recommendations and included them in this order as follows:

- Require only the head and antlers to be submitted to Department staff.
- Harvest of an antlered deer using a DMAP must be reported to a specified Department office or personnel within the business hours of the next 72 hours of harvest.

**Issues Pros and Cons**

The Department attempts to minimize deer damage to agricultural lands through a variety of tools. Where necessary, the Department issues DMAPs to eligible landowners to take antlerless deer during the hunting seasons. In some areas, DMAPs have not been effective at reducing agricultural damage by bucks. Current regulations allow for the take of antlered deer within the pilot area. Allowing an antlered deer to be taken on a DMAP offers an additional solution for agricultural producers who have bucks causing rub damage on horticultural trees.

Some hunters may be in favor of allowing buck harvest with a DMAP in areas where there is an APR. Antler point restrictions are used to protect an age class of bucks from being harvested and this proposal may eliminate the opportunity to advance some bucks to the next age class.

Requiring landowners to submit the head and antlers to the Department will allow the landowner to utilize the carcass and allow the Department to verify harvest.

**Biological**

The Department does not expect a biological impact based on data from the pilot area regarding total buck harvest.

**Social**

The abundance of food in the form of available agricultural crops combined with the more than adequate cover of scattered woodlots and idle fields provide near perfect white-tailed deer habitat. Agricultural lands are almost entirely found on private land and the abundant nutritional forage provided by crops allows for tremendous deer productivity. Allowing bucks to be harvested on a DMAP will provide an additional management tool to eliminate damage to agricultural crops.

**Economic**

This proposal will allow all landowners an increased ability to protect their agricultural investment.
Reporting Requirements

The NRC requested the Department include in Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 10 of 2014, an additional reporting requirement of all permittees authorized to use a firearm. In addition to the DMAF reporting requirement due by January 15, permittees authorized to use a firearm must provide the Department by October 29, the name and address of all hunters, number of deer harvested, and the method of take used under the permit from October 1 through October 14. The Department proposes eliminating this additional reporting requirement and adding it to the DMAP report that is due by January 15. The report will include the following:

- Name and address of all hunters.
- Number of deer harvested under the authority of the permit.
- If permitted to use a firearm, the name and address of all hunters, number of deer harvested, and method of take used under the permit from October 1 through October 14.

This change is proposed statewide. This will provide simplicity of reporting requirements.

In order to collect data that shows the use of DMAPs is an effective means to address landowner deer conflict issues, the Department must receive an annual report from permittees detailing the number of deer taken under permits at the property, the method of take used, and the licensed hunters participating. Occasionally, a landowner does not submit the annually required report or submits a report with fraudulent or incomplete data. Currently, if the permittee fails to comply with the conditions of the permit, such as submitting an annual report, the permittee is ineligible to receive DMAPs for one year. In order to ensure better records management, the Department proposes expanding ineligibility for a landowner to receive DMAPs for up to three years for repeated noncompliance.

Issues Pros and Cons

This will eliminate confusion and problems associated with submitting two DMAP reports to the Department. Some applicants submit the wrong reporting form or reporting information. It will also help alleviate extra administrative requirements for the Department. By expanding the length of ineligibility, the Department hopes to receive better records and to promote compliance with the conditions of the permit.

Biological

The Department does not expect a biological impact.

Social

This will help eliminate confusion and problems associated with reporting information to the Department.

Economic

The Department does not expect an economic impact.
Drummond Island (DMU 117) Regulations:

Implement a three-point Antler Point Restriction on the Single Deer License

For more than 10 years, DMU 117 has implemented a “no-spoke rule” that differs from nearby mainland hunting. This strategy was implemented to offer young bucks a chance to advance to an older age class, thereby providing an opportunity for hunters to see and harvest older bucks with greater antler development.

The Department proposes to implement a three-point APR on the single deer license in DMU 117. The Drummond Island Plan Writing Team (a Department facilitated consortium representing local government, local businesses, sportsmen, residents, and recreationalists) requested this proposal.

Pros and Cons

Advancing some young bucks to an older age class would diversify the age class structure and presumably provide some bucks with greater antler development. These restrictions will provide more hunting opportunities on older aged class bucks in future seasons.

This proposed regulation will allow for the same APR on both the single deer and deer combination licenses. However, not all hunters may want stricter APRs.

Biological

In 1997 the NRC placed a two-point APR on Drummond Island. This regulation allowed for only bucks with two or more antler points on one side to be legally harvested. Based upon UP data, it is anticipated this regulation is protecting on average 43 percent of the yearling bucks. Enacting this regulation would potentially protect an even higher percentage of yearling bucks from harvest, as well as a percentage of the 2.5 year old age class.

Social

During the years 2006-2010, the average annual buck harvest on Drummond Island was 348 deer. In 2011-2015, that annual average dropped to 151 deer. The consensus on the writing team is that people who hunt on Drummond Island would derive more satisfaction from having regulations that would protect young bucks and provide more opportunities to pursue older and larger bucks. This regulation proposal was included in the Drummond Island Comprehensive Natural Resources Management Plan. That plan was released for public comment before being finalized. While the Department acknowledges that some hunters may be disappointed by the fact that most yearling bucks would not be available for harvest, the Department received no negative comments during the public review of the plan.

Economic

The Drummond Island (Island) economy is principally based upon outdoor recreational tourism. Historically, deer hunting was a large part of that economy. In recent years, deer hunting has become a much smaller factor in the Island economy. The Drummond Island Tourist
Implement a One Antlered Deer per Deer Hunting Season Regulation

The Department proposes that an individual shall not take more than one antlered deer in DMU 117 in a deer hunting season.

Pros and Cons

The Drummond Island Plan Writing Team believes that many hunters have interest in the one antlered deer regulation, although it may cause confusion among hunters, especially those who may hunt on the Island and elsewhere in the state.

Biological

In the past five years, an annual average of 1,119 hunters (all seasons combined) hunted on Drummond Island. If two percent of those hunters (UP average) kill two bucks, this regulation may result in approximately 24 fewer bucks being harvested each year (one for every five square miles).

Social

The Drummond Island Plan Writing Team requested this proposal. This regulation proposal was included in the Drummond Island Comprehensive Natural Resources Management Plan.

Economic

Hunting is an important part of the Island’s economy. Deer hunting is a major draw, contributing heavily to outdoor recreational tourism in the fall. Stakeholders believe that management of the deer herd and hunting regulation changes that encourage exceptional hunting and outdoor experiences will strengthen the outdoor recreation for residents and visitors alike.

Northeast Lower Peninsula Multi-County (DMU 487) Regulations:

Retaining Antlerless Tagging Options and Adding a three-point APR to the Single Deer License

A self-sustained infection of bovine tuberculosis (TB) continues to persist within deer in the northeast LP. Beginning with the 2010 season, the Department recommended regulations in DMU 487 to expand antlerless harvest opportunities while restricting harvest of young bucks that were the most common target of hunters in the TB area. The intent was to increase the proportion of antlerless deer harvest while not constraining the harvest of older bucks. Ultimately, “Hunter’s Choice” regulations were passed, such that hunters who purchased a firearm license or an archery license were limited to harvesting only one antlered deer in DMU 487, while hunters who purchased a deer combination license were permitted to harvest
two antlered deer but one had to have at least three antler points on one side and the other had to have at least four antler points on one side. Deer firearm and combination licenses were authorized to be used to take antlerless deer in the firearm or muzzleloading season in DMU 487.

In 2014, the Department assessed these regulation changes in light of any benefits they were providing to TB eradication. The 2013 deer harvest survey was not finalized to evaluate the full effects and the Department recommended retaining the liberalized antlerless tagging options in DMU 487 and “Hunters Choice” regulations were kept in place to provide for a longer period for evaluation of this strategy over 2014-2016.

The 2013 survey showed that 51 percent of hunters in the northeast LP and 45 percent of hunters statewide supported the Hunter’s Choice restrictions in DMU 487, with 26 percent and 20 percent opposed, respectively. The same question was posed in 2014, with the only significant difference between the 2013 data showing increased support for the restriction among statewide hunters, increasing from 45 percent to 47 percent.

The restrictions, which were developed to increase antlerless harvest and reduce the rate of apparent TB prevalence in the area, appear to have done neither. Though the first year of Hunter’s Choice in the TB core area (DMU 452) resulted in added pressure applied to antlered deer relative to antlerless deer, the overall harvest that year declined. Today, the rate of antlered deer comprising the total harvest in these six counties is higher than when the regulation was first implemented. Total antlered harvest has increased, despite a decline in hunter numbers, indicating a growing deer herd. Bovine tuberculosis prevalence peaked at 2.7 percent in 2015 and remains at 2.0 percent in 2016, which is higher than observed prevalence rates dating back to 2006 in DMU 452. The yearling buck harvest percentage has decreased from about 40 percent prior to the implementation of Hunter’s Choice to about 30 percent in 2016, indicating the regulation has been successful in advancing the age of bucks in this area, but the antlerless harvest has been insufficient to meet disease management goals.

After further assessment of regulations related to TB eradication, the Department has developed a comprehensive management proposal for the TB area. This includes non-regulatory items such as:

- Working with the MUCC Cooperative Coordinator to establish more cooperatives in the area which have been shown to result in higher hunter satisfaction levels, higher rates of antlerless harvest, and higher rates of compatibility with management goals set forth by the Department.
- The formation of a new work group, the Northern Lower Deer Stewardship Collaboration that includes the Department, MUCC, Michigan State University Extension and the local Conservation Districts. The goal of the group is to work towards achieving the goals put forth in the Bovine Tuberculosis Disease Management Plan, mitigate crop damage by deer including deer/cattle interactions, and work more closely with landowners and hunters to help bridge differences in desired outcomes.
Deer Management Assistance Permits and Antler Point Restrictions
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- Coordinating the two grant opportunities available in the northeast LP to favor those individuals who are:
  o willing to pursue specific deer management goals (e.g., harvesting more antlerless deer than antlered, having all deer tested, etc.)
  o willing to form cooperatives or neighborhood partnerships
  o near active agriculture

Within this new approach to management for the TB area, the Department also proposes retaining the liberalized antlerless tagging options for DMU 487, allowing antlerless deer to be taken on a single deer license or deer combination license during the firearms, muzzleloader, or antlerless seasons. This allows for the most flexibility of harvesting antlerless deer. In addition, the Department proposes adding a three-point APR to the single deer license. Hunter harvest data indicates that there is a higher willingness to harvest antlerless deer in areas managed with an APR than in areas without an APR. Data from the northwest LP 12 counties under an APR restriction has shown an increase in antlerless harvest by an average of 13 percent between 2013 and 2015 compared to the 2010 to 2012 timeframe, whereas antlerless harvest has declined two percent and 16 percent in DMU 487 and the middle counties of the northern LP, respectively. This approach is consistent with trying to reduce the deer population and apparent prevalence rate of TB in the northeast LP. The Department proposes focusing on this management direction for the next three years to determine whether an increase in antlerless harvest can be observed in the area as a result of these changes.

Pros and Cons

The additional APR should eliminate the confusion associated with different restrictions on different license types that has been observed in this area since the regulation began. If the Department observes increases in antlerless harvest, the overall population should be lowered over time, which should benefit TB management by lowering apparent prevalence rates. Increased harvest and cooperative relationship building should also increase testing rates to better achieve the Department’s requirements to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) which requires a certain number of deer to be tested from various areas each year.

Some hunters may not like the additional restriction on the single deer license if they are not in favor of APRs, and may adjust their hunting strategies accordingly to ensure the regulation is not maintained. If for any reason antlerless deer harvest is not increased and sustained due to this proposed change, the apparent prevalence rate of TB may increase. Department staff will be closely monitoring the disease prevalence rate in the area to make sure that rates do not increase due to older deer being in the population or deer numbers increasing too quickly.

Biological

Adding a mandatory APR to the single deer license should affect slightly less than 50 percent of the hunters in the northeast LP, as roughly half of the hunters purchase a deer combination license and hunt under an APR. The proposed change should increase pressure on antlerless deer as there is now a subset of the population (yearling males) that are largely protected. As previously stated, the Department will closely monitor the disease prevalence rates over the next three years.
Social

Current survey data (2012 Deer Hunter Opinion Survey, 2012 APR Survey: Northwestern Lower Peninsula, 2013 APR Survey: North Central Lower Peninsula, 2013 APR Survey: Southern Lower Peninsula surveys) indicates that more than 50 percent of surveyed hunters approve of APRs. Even in areas with no mandatory APRs, there has been a downward trend of harvesting 1.5 year old bucks and an upward trend in harvesting older bucks. This, in addition to the cooperative work with MUCC, the new work group, the Northern Lower Deer Stewardship Collaboration, and the new grant criteria can better align with the direction of achieving the goals set forth in the Bovine Tuberculosis Disease Management Plan. This proposal is being brought forward to work with hunters in DMU 487 to give them a regulation that is favorable to a majority of hunters. However, if there is not a reciprocation of increased antlerless harvest due to this rule change, the rate of TB in the deer herd is likely to increase.

Economic

The primary economic impact concerns relate to the impacts of Michigan’s loss of TB-free status in cattle.

Northwest Lower Peninsula Antler Point Restriction Re-survey:

Antler point restrictions are a means by which harvest of bucks (particularly young bucks) can be restricted by requiring hunters to only harvest deer with a minimum number of antler points. The Department supports the voluntary implementation of APRs on private land. A process developed by the NRC, the Department, and other interested stakeholders allows hunting organizations to propose implementation of a mandatory APR in one or more DMUs. A key component of this process is the requirement for the Department to conduct a survey to evaluate support for these regulations among hunters in the proposed area. If the Department has no concerns regarding implementation of the APR, implementation by the NRC will be recommended if the survey achieves at least a 50 percent response rate and indicates at least 66 percent of hunters support the proposal. Support for APR regulations implemented under this process is to be reevaluated after they are in place for five years.

For the 2013 deer hunting season, the NRC approved an implementation from the Northwest Michigan Branch of the Quality Deer Management Association of an APR to require that hunters harvest an antlered deer only if they have at least one antler with three or more antler points. A second antlered deer would need to have at least four points on one antler, which is consistent with current regulations. The proposed area included Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Emmet, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Lake, Manistee, Mason, Missaukee, Osceola, and Wexford counties in the northwest LP.

This area was resurveyed to determine if the current APR should be recommended to remain in place permanently, or if the APR should be removed. The Department mail survey to evaluate support for the permanency of the APR is still ongoing, but preliminary results from the first two mailings have achieved approximately a 70 percent response rate and indicated about 76 percent (+/- 2 percent) of hunters support the APR. The Department proposes the NRC continue the APR without sunset beginning with the 2017 deer hunting season.
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South Fox Island Unit (DMU 245) Regulations:

Remove the two-point APR

A special deer hunt is conducted on South Fox Island to control the deer herd and preserve the natural vegetation. In order to simplify and provide hunters with more hunting opportunities, the Department proposes removing the two-point APR in DMU 245.

Issues Pros and Cons

Removing the two-point APR will provide more opportunities for hunters to harvest deer on South Fox Island. The deer harvest is low for the South Fox Island Unit, as not many hunters utilize this hunting area and opportunity.

Biological

The Department does not expect a biological impact.

Social

Department staff has indicated that removing the APR will provide additional opportunities for hunters.

Economic

The Department does not expect an economic impact.

Remove the Permit Requirement and Designated Season Dates

Current regulations require hunters to obtain a South Fox Island permit, along with a current Michigan deer hunting license for the appropriate season, to take deer during the designated open seasons in DMU 245. In order to simplify and remove barriers to harvesting deer in DMU 245, the Department proposes eliminating the requirement to obtain a South Fox Island permit.

In addition, the Department proposes that the South Fox Island season dates for bow and arrow season and firearm deer season align with the current statewide open dates for these seasons.

These proposed changes will provide consistency between regulations and allow hunters to use a single deer license or combination deer license for the appropriate season to hunt deer in DMU 245.

Issues Pros and Cons

Eliminating the requirement to obtain a permit and remove the designated seasons will remove barriers to harvesting deer in DMU 245. In addition, it will simplify and provide consistent regulations. It will also alleviate extra administrative requirements for the Department.

There may be some confusion to hunters that have been hunting deer in DMU 245, as these regulations have been in place for many years.

Biological
Current hunting pressure is not likely to result in an overharvest of deer, therefore additional regulations to protect bucks is unnecessary.

*Social*

The demand for permits has declined from over 100 permits issued in 2005 to less than 10 issued in recent years. These new changes will provide more opportunities for hunters to hunt in DMU 245.

*Economic*

The Department does not expect an economic impact.
Relevant Divisions have contributed to the preparation of this order. This order was submitted for information on June 8, 2017, at the Natural Resources Commission meeting. This item appeared on the Department’s May 2017 calendar and may be eligible for approval on July 13, 2017.

Russ Mason, Ph.D., Chief
Wildlife Division

Gary Hagler, Chief
Law Enforcement Division

William O'Neill, Chief
Forest Resources Division

Ronald A. Olson, Chief
Parks and Recreation Division

James Dexter, Chief
Fisheries Division

William E. Moritz, Ph.D.
Natural Resources Deputy

I have analyzed and discussed these recommendations with staff and concur as to matters over which the Director has authority.

Keith Creagh, Director

Date 7/13/17
WILDLIFE CONSERVATION ORDER

Amendment No. 6 of 2017

By authority conferred on the Natural Resources Commission and the Director of the Department of Natural Resources by sections 40107 and 40113a of 1994 PA 451, MCL 324.40107 and 324.40113a, it is ordered that effective July 14, 2017, the following section(s) of the Wildlife Conservation Order shall read as follows:

Publishers note: The repealed section pertained to “Deer hunting in deer management unit 487, antler restriction.”

3.101c Deer hunting in deer management unit 117 antler restriction, one antlered deer limit.
Sec. 3.101c (1) Notwithstanding any other provisions of this order, except sections 3.101e and 3.101g, in deer management unit 117 an individual shall not take an antlered deer unless the deer has at least 1 antler with 3 or more antler points each 1 or more inches in length. An individual shall not take more than one antlered deer in deer management unit 117 in a deer hunting season.

Publishers note: The repealed section pertained to “Deer hunting in deer management units 045, 115, and 122 antler restrictions.”

3.101i Deer hunting in the northwest Lower Peninsula, antler restriction.
Sec. 3.101i (1) Notwithstanding any other provisions of this order, except sections 3.101e and 3.101g, in deer management units 005, 010, 015, 024, 028, 040, 043, 045, 051, 053, 057, 067, 083, 115, and 122, an individual shall not take an antlered deer unless the deer has at least 1 antler with 3 or more antler points each 1 or more inches in length.

3.106 South Fox Island deer management unit, open seasons, permitted hunting arms.
Sec. 3.106 (1) The bow and arrow only deer hunting season shall be from October 1 to October 28 within the South Fox Island deer management unit.

(2) The firearm deer hunting season shall be from October 29 to November 26 within the South Fox Island deer management unit. Permissible firearms, crossbows, and bows and arrows shall be the same as those for zone 2 during the firearm deer season.

(3) A person shall not take a deer from November 27 to January 1 within the South Fox Island deer management unit.

Publishers note: The repealed section pertained to “South Fox Island deer hunting regulations.”

5.80 Deer management assistance (DMA) hunting permits; definitions, criteria for issuance, validity of permits, application procedures, restrictions and requirements; except; unlawful acts.
Sec. 5.80 (1) The terms in this section shall have the meaning described to them in this section.

(a) Permit means a deer management assistance (DMA) permit.

(b) Permittee means an individual who has applied for and been authorized to purchase deer management assistance permits by the department.

(c) Authorized designee means one individual who has been designated by the landowner and approved by the department, to act on behalf of the landowner to apply for and implement the provisions of deer management assistance permits. The department reserves the right to deny an individual, including the permittee, the authority to personally implement the provisions of a permit if such authority would conflict with a court order, administrative rule, or law.
(2) Permits may be issued statewide to owners of land, or their authorized designee, located in areas where current antlerless harvest methods are insufficient to achieve department deer management objectives or where one of the following conditions exist:

(a) The department has documented that the property owner has significant agricultural or horticultural crop damage caused by deer.

(b) The department has documented that a serious disease outbreak is a threat to the deer herd, livestock, or human health.

(c) The department has documented a significant safety hazard caused by deer.

(d) Current antlerless regulations are insufficient to achieve landowner deer management objectives.

(3) DMA permits are valid only during an open season for the taking of deer as established by this order and only upon the land for which issued.

(4) DMA permits are valid only for the taking of an antlerless deer. An individual hunting under the authority of a DMA permit shall carry the unused permit and shall exhibit the unused permit upon the request of a law enforcement officer.

(5) An individual owning land within a qualifying area as determined by the department, or their authorized designee, may apply for a DMA permit with the wildlife supervisor on a form provided by the department. This agreement will include an estimate of desired antlerless harvest and numbers of hunters needed to meet the desired harvest objective. A DMA permit shall be signed by both the permittee and wildlife supervisor. The number of DMA permits will be determined by the wildlife supervisor. A minimum of 5 DMA permits shall be issued per permittee. Failure to comply with the terms and conditions of the permit will make the permittee ineligible to receive a DMA permit for a period of 1 year.

(6) The permittee shall not purchase more DMA permits than approved by the department.

(7) DMA permits may be subsequently issued by the permittee. An individual shall not accept, carry afield, use or attempt to use a DMA permit unless in possession of a current base license and deer license. A permittee shall not sell, lend, barter, or trade a DMA permit. Permittees shall inform hunters about rules pertaining to the use of DMA permits.

(8) A hunter issued a DMA permit by a permittee or authorized designee shall not sell, lend, barter, trade, or allow another individual to use the DMA permit. Unused permits may be reissued to hunters only by the permittee or authorized designee.

(9) The provisions of section 3.103 shall apply to a permit and kill tag issued under this section. In addition, unless otherwise provided in this section, an individual issued a DMA permit shall comply with lawful hunting hours and all regulatory requirements for the taking of deer for the season in which they are hunting.

(a) A firearm shall not be used with a DMA permit during archery season except from October 1 through October 14, on lands not including Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Grand Traverse, and Leelanau counties, with permission. This exception may be authorized on a case-by-case basis by the wildlife supervisor and district law enforcement supervisor if the department determines that take by archery methods will not be sufficient to reduce conflict due to unusual circumstances.

(b) A firearm shall not be used with a DMA permit during archery season except in Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Grand Traverse, and Leelanau counties as authorized on a case-by-case basis by the wildlife supervisor and district law enforcement supervisor. In addition to the provisions in this order, the five-county pilot program exception criteria shall be as published in the DMA permit decision tree.

(i) A permittee shall observe a quiet period from October 1 through October 4 and from November 10 to November 14 and shall not use firearms during this time.
(ii) DMA permits may be valid for the taking of deer with antlers extending three inches or more above the skull with permission when active and acute agricultural or horticultural damage is being caused by an antlered deer. This exception may be authorized on a case-by-case basis by the wildlife supervisor and district law enforcement supervisor if the department determines that taking only antlerless deer will not be sufficient to reduce active and acute agricultural or horticultural damage.

(iii) After attaching the kill tag, any antlered deer carcass shall be transported in an open manner to the nearest department office and surrendered within 72 hours of harvest.

(10) A permittee shall report by January 15, on a form provided by the department, to the wildlife supervisor the name and address of all hunters and the number of deer harvested under the authority of DMA permits. Failure to comply with the terms and conditions of the permit will make the permittee ineligible to receive a DMA permit for a period of 1 year.

(a) A permittee authorized for firearm use as provided by subsection (9a) above shall adhere to additional reporting requirements. A permittee shall report, on a form provided by the department, by October 29 to the wildlife supervisor the name and address of all hunters, the number of deer harvested, and the method of take used under the authority of DMA permits from October 1 through October 14. Failure to comply with the terms and conditions of the permit will make the permittee ineligible to receive a DMA permit for a period of 1 year.

(11) Deer taken under the authority of a DMA permit shall not be included in the season limit as defined in section 3.101(8) of this order. The daily limit and season limit shall be 1 deer per DMA permit.

(12) Subsection (9)(b) shall be rescinded on or before June 7, 2018.

Issued on this 13th day of July 2017.

Approved as to matters over which the Natural Resources Commission has authority.

John Matonich, Chairman
Natural Resources Commission

Approved as to matters over which the Director has authority.

Keith Creagh
Director
June 12, 2017

TO: Keith Creagh, Director

INFORMATION: Natural Resources Commission

Transaction: Sale of Surplus DNR-Managed Land
Sturgeon River Public Water Access Site
Houghton and Baraga Counties
Land Transaction Case #20160178

Sale: 1.63 acres and a 66 ft. by 3,314.6 ft. access easement

Sale Price: $1.00

Description: Houghton County, Portage Township, T52N, R34W, Section 1; AND
Baraga County, Baraga Township, T52N, R33W, Sections 6 and 7:
As more particularly described on the signed Land Transaction
Agreement.

Applicant(s): Houghton County, Houghton, Michigan.

Authority: Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451, as
amended.

Notice: This item will appear on the Department of Natural Resources
(Department) July 5, 2017, calendar, and is eligible for approval on
July 12, 2017. The transaction is also posted in a local newspaper as
required by statute.


Minerals: The state does not own mineral rights to this property.

Comments: Houghton County built the Otter Lake dam on this state-owned property
in 1975. The dam was constructed in order to control extensive spring
flooding, silt deposition, and to maintain the established legal lake level.

Because the state owns the land and Houghton County owns the dam,
Department staff have found themselves spending a considerable
amount of time resolving the numerous legal and management
questions which naturally arise from this situation. Staff from both
organizations recognized this situation and worked cooperatively to
resolve it by preparing this proposal. The goal is to unify the ownership
of the land and dam so that staff from both organizations can focus their
activities on other objectives, rather than on the legal and management
concerns involved in co-managing this property.
The proposed sale to the applicant was reviewed and recommended for approval by the Land Exchange Review Committee on December 15, 2016. Proceeds will be deposited into the Land Exchange Facilitation Fund (LEFF). The LEFF allows the Department to sell rights in land and deposit the proceeds in a fund which can then be used to acquire replacement property.

Recommendation:

1. That the land be sold to the applicant for $1.00.

2. That the proceeds of the sale be deposited in the LEFF.

I approve the staff recommendations.

Keith Creagh
Director

7/13/17
Date Approved
SALE OF SURPLUS DNR-MANAGED LAND
Sturgeon River Public Water Access Site – Houghton and Baraga Counties
Land Transaction Case #20160178

Section 1, T52N, R34W, Portage Township, Houghton County
Section 6 and 7, T52N, R33W, Baraga Township, Baraga County

- Surplus DNR land to be sold (1.63 acres)
- Easement to be conveyed (66 ft. by 3,314.6 ft.)
- State land
- Private land
June 12, 2017

TO: Keith Creagh, Director

INFORMATION: Natural Resources Commission

Transaction: Sale of Surplus DNR-Managed Land
Grayling Management Unit – Crawford County
Land Transaction Case #20170086

Sale: 43.79 acres
Sale Price: $61,000.00

PA 240 of 2012: This parcel is north of the Mason-Arenac County line and will result in a decrease of 43.79 acres to the total of DNR-Managed lands.

Description: Crawford County, Grayling Township, T26N, R03W, Section 32: Beginning at the S 1/4 corner of Section 32, T26N, R3W, thence N01°01'09"E along the North-South 1/4 line 3,424.24 feet to the southerly right of way of the Lake State (MDOT) Railroad right of way and a found ½" bar; thence S32°22'23"E along said southerly right of way 2,735.90 feet to a found bar and cap; thence S89°58'47"W parallel with the south section line 1,359.13 feet to a found bar and cap; thence S00°41'25"W 1,112.55 feet to the south section line; thence S00°58'47"W 153.25 feet to the point of beginning.

Applicant(s): JJJ Holdings, LLC, St. Louis, Michigan.

Authority: Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451, as amended.

Notice: This item will appear on the Department of Natural Resources (Department) July 5, 2017 calendar, and is eligible for approval on July 12, 2017.

Acquired: By tax reversion.

Minerals: To be retained.

Comments: This land is located within an area identified under the 2012 Growth Management Proposal memorandum of understanding (MOU). Partners in the MOU are the Crawford County Economic Development Partnership, Grayling Township and the Department. This MOU was first signed in 2000, and was reauthorized in 2012 and 2017. The MOU identified public lands that could be used for commercial and industrial development in an effort to focus growth and create regional prosperity where existing infrastructure could support development.
JJJ Holdings, LLC, has worked with the Growth Management Proposal partners and intends to use the site to build their trucking and logistics operations.

The Department of Natural Resources Managed Public Land Strategy (Strategy) provides goals and objectives regarding local engagement, integrated local and regional planning and prioritization, and criteria to accomplish land acquisition and disposal. Conveyance of the desired property will help achieve the Strategy goals and objectives by fostering and supporting local and regional economic prosperity in the area.

Proceeds from the sale will be deposited into the Land Exchange Facilitation Fund (LEFF). The LEFF allows the Department to sell rights in land and deposit the proceeds in a fund which can then be used to acquire replacement property.

Engagement: Promotion of the Grayling Industrial Park partnership was discussed with the Department during local engagement meetings between the Director and the ten counties with the most public ownership within their jurisdictions, and was identified as a priority for Crawford County and Grayling Township.

Recommendation: (1) That the land be sold to the applicant for $61,000.00.

(2) That the proceeds of the sale be deposited in the LEFF.

(3) That the state retain mineral rights and aboriginal antiquities.
Russ Mason, Ph.D., Chief
Wildlife Division

William O'Neill, Chief
Forest Resources Division

James L. Dexter, Chief
Fisheries Division

Ronald A. Olson, Chief
Parks and Recreation Division

William E. Moritz, Ph.D.
Natural Resources Deputy

Mark H. Hoffman
Chief Administrative Officer

I approve the staff recommendations.

Keith Creagh
Director

7/13/17
Date Approved
SALE OF SURPLUS DNR-MANAGED LAND
Grayling Management Unit, Crawford County
Land Transaction #20170086

Section 32, T26N, R03W, Grayling Township

// Surplus DNR land to be sold (43.79 acres)

- State land
- Private land

0 1,000 Feet
06/02/2017

DNR Project Boundaries
June 12, 2017

TO: Keith Creagh, Director

INFORMATION: Natural Resources Commission

Transaction: Parks and Recreation Land Acquisition
P. H. Hoeft State Park – Presque Isle County
The Kreft Tract
Land Transaction Case #20150095

Purchase: 39.19 acres - $35,000.00

Funding Source: Land Exchange Facilitation Fund

PA 240 of 2012: PILT Estimate: $377.23
This parcel is located north of the Mason-Arenac County line and will result in
39.19 counted acres.

Description: Presque Isle County, Rogers Township, T36N, R05E, Section 31:
Part of the SW Fractional 1/4 of the SW Fractional 1/4.

Seller(s): Kenneth H. Kreft, Rogers City, Michigan.

Authority: Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451, as
amended.

Notice: This item will appear on the Department of Natural Resources
(Department) July 5, 2017, calendar, and is eligible for approval on
July 12, 2017.

Management Purpose: The property will be managed by Parks and Recreation Division as part of
the P. H. Hoeft State Park. It will provide additional lands for public outdoor
recreation.

Comments: The property is a rectangular 39.19-acre parcel covered in balsam, poplar
and other low land species of trees and brush. The land is level and tends to
be seasonally wet. Located within the dedicated boundary of P. H. Hoeft
State Park, it is bounded to the north and east by state-owned land. This
purchase constitutes the last major purchase required within the dedicated
boundary of P. H. Hoeft State Park.

Acquisition of this parcel will contribute to the Department’s goal of
consolidating state ownership, securing wildlife habitat, and increasing public
recreation opportunities.

The seller will convey mineral rights relative to this tract.
The Presque Isle County Board of Commissioners has expressed support for the purchase. Rogers Township has been contacted.

1. That the acquisition be approved, with payment to be made from the LEFF account.

2. This land is to be dedicated as part of the P. H. Hoeft State Park.

3. That the seller convey mineral rights.

Russ Mason, Ph.D., Chief Wildlife Division

William O'Neill, Chief Forest Resources Division

James L. Dexter, Chief Fisheries Division

Ronald A. Olson, Chief Parks and Recreation Division

William E. Moritz, Ph.D. Natural Resources Deputy

Mark H. Hoffman Chief Administrative Officer

I approve the staff recommendations.

Keith Creagh
Director

7/13/17
Date Approved
PARKS AND RECREATION LAND ACQUISITION
P. H. Hoefl State Park – Presque Isle County
The Kret Tract
Land Transaction Case #20150095

Section 31, T36N, R05E, Rogers Township

- Land to be acquired by DNR (39.19 acres)
- State land
- Private land
- DNR project boundaries

05/22/2017
June 12, 2017

TO:    Keith Creagh, Director

INFORMATION:  Natural Resources Commission

Transaction:  State Trail Gift of Easements
Gogebic County Iron Belle Trail – Gogebic County
Land Transaction Case #20170112

Acquisition:  2.90 miles of permanent trail rights (22.52 acres)

PA 240 of 2012:  PILT Estimate: None (trail easements)
The trail easements are north of the Mason-Arenac County line and will
not result in an increase in counted acres.

Description:  Gogebic County, Bessemer Township, T47N, R46W, Sections 11, 12,
13, 14, & 15: as more completely described in the case file.

Grantors:  City of Bessemer, Michigan.
Bessemer Township, Michigan.

Authority:  Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451, as
amended.

Notice:  This item will appear on the Department of Natural Resources
(Department) July 5, 2017, calendar, and is eligible for approval on
July 12, 2017.

Management Purpose:  Under an existing lease, the land will be managed by the Western
Gateway Trail Authority as part of the Gogebic County Iron Belle Trail.

Comments:  At the June 2012 NRC meeting, the Director approved the purchase of
an inactive railroad corridor between Ironwood and Bessemer for use as
a non-motorized trail. That trail corridor is now developed, and the
recreational trail easements being offered the Department extend the
trail corridor eastward toward the City of Wakefield.

Working in cooperation with trail advocates and local governmental
representatives, the Department is aiding in the effort to stitch a corridor
together in an effort to connect the communities of Wakefield,
Bessemer, Ironwood, and the state of Wisconsin to the Iron Belle Trail

Acquisition of these recreational trail easements will contribute to
achieving Department and division goals and strategies to secure
continuous access for a portion of our designated trail system and the
Iron Belle Trail.
Engagement: As evidenced by the gift of easements, the City of Bessemer, Bessemer Township, the Board of County Road Commissioners of the County of Gogebic, and the Western Gateway Trail Authority strongly support the development of the Gogebic County Iron Belle Trail.

Recommendation:

1. That the gift of easements be accepted with appreciation.

2. That the land be dedicated as part of the Gogebic County Iron Belle Trail and administered by the Parks and Recreation Division.

Russ Mason, Ph.D., Chief
Wildlife Division

William O'Neill, Chief
Forest Resources Division

James L. Dexter, Chief
Fisheries Division

Ronald A. Olson, Chief
Parks and Recreation Division

William E. Moritz, Ph.D.
Natural Resources Deputy

Mark H. Hoffman
Chief Administrative Officer

I approve the staff recommendations.

Keith Creagh
Director

7/13/17
Date Approved
STATE TRAIL GIFT OF EASEMENTS
Gogebic County Iron Belle Trail - Gogebic County
Land Transaction Case #20170112

City of Bessemer and Bessemer Township

- Easements to be acquired by DNR
- Existing state-owned trail corridor
- Proposed trail

0 Feet
05/19/2017

DNR Project Boundaries