

MINUTES

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

AUGUST 16, 2007

LANSING CENTER
333 E. MICHIGAN
LANSING

PRESENT FOR THE NRC

Keith Charters, Chair
Mary Brown
Hurley Colman, Jr.
Darnell Earley
John Madigan
J. R. Richardson
Frank Wheatlake

PRESENT FOR STAFF

Peter Manning, Legal Counsel
Rebecca Humphries, Director
James Ekdahl, UP Field Deputy
Teresa Gloden, Assistant to the NRC
Other DNR Staff

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chairman Charters called the Committee of the Whole meeting of the Natural Resources Commission (NRC) to order at 3:03 p.m.

Draft Michigan Gray Wolf Management Plan Presentation

Pat Lederle, Wildlife Division, presented a power point on the "Michigan Wolf Management Plan" draft. Minimum winter wolf population estimates indicate a steady increase between 1988 and present. The estimated population is now at 509. The Plan revision was necessary because of the increased population size and distribution, improved understanding of wolf biology, changes in regulations, and a shift from recovery to management of the species. During the plan revision process, several public meetings were held and a comment period was given; a public attitude study was done; biological and social science were reviewed; a wolf roundtable was held; the plan was revised; and a 90 day public review process of the draft plan is now in place. Wolf management goals: 1) maintain a viable Michigan wolf population; facilitate wolf-related benefits; minimize wolf-related conflicts; and use socially-acceptable management methods to address these conflicts.

The Plan will be open to public comment from August 16 to November 14, 2007 and can be reviewed on the the web at: www.michigan.gov/dnr, or requested by mail at: Michigan DNR Wildlife Division, P.O. Box 30444, Lansing, MI 48909. Comments can

be sent to: wolf_comments@michigan.gov or Wolf Plan Comments, Attn: Endangered Species Coordinator, Michigan DNR Wildlife Division, P.O. Box 30444, Lansing, MI 48909.

Commissioner Madigan questioned whether the comments received in the UP were different from those received in the Lower Peninsula. **Pat Lederle** responded yes. The comments were different in that the comments from the UP were related to impacts of wolves on the landscape and said the UP meetings were better attended. **Mr. Lederle** also said that a minimum viable population is approximately 200 wolves. He noted that the only issue where consensus was not reached with the issue of recreational harvest.

In response to a question from **Commissioner Richardson**, **Mr. Lederle** said between 40 and 50 wolves are collared at one time. **Commissioner Madigan** questioned whether there is a plan to address population growth at a certain point. **Mr. Lederle** responded by saying the Plan is geared toward responding as impacts increase.

Commissioner Wheatlake questioned what would cause the wolf population to level off. **Mr. Lederle** responded habitat, mortality and disease could be some of the causes.

Sleeper Lake Fire Update

Lynne Boyd, Chief, Forest, Mineral and Fire Management Division (FMFM), reported that the Sleeper Lake Fire was detected by the DNR on Thursday, August 2 in a remote area north of Newberry. Due to the remoteness of the area, it was very difficult to get to. As of August 16, 2007, 18672 acres have been burned with 62 percent containment – meaning 62 percent of the fire has been stopped for the time-being. However, conditions can change causing containment to be lost. Currently, only one unoccupied hunting camp has been lost. There are 206 personnel on duty fighting this fire including staff from the DNR, National Guard, Michigan State Police, Wisconsin and Connecticut. Part of the challenge in fighting a fire such as this is it burns deep in the ground in organic soils causing easy re-ignition and damage to the tree roots causing unstable trees.

Ms. Boyd noted that the Red Cross has donated food, clothing and supplies that are available to the fire fighters free of charge. The local citizens in Newberry have volunteered to do laundry on a daily basis.

Firefighters are growing tired and reaching a point where mandatory rest periods are being imposed. There is a concern that firefighters in the remainder of the state are being stretched very thin and there is a concern if other fires break out there may not be the staff to fight them. Timber harvests are not being accomplished as a result. Staff is evaluating what tasks FMFM will not accomplish as a result of the focus of effort to fight this fire.

Staff is awaiting a decision on a statewide fire ban proclamation by Governor Granholm. This is expected later today.

Ms. Boyd gave the utmost kudos to the firefighters and noted that the compact with other states and provinces has also been invaluable.

Director Humphries said that the DNR is unsure how the State will pay for this fire. As of today, the cost of the fire is nearly \$2 million and rapidly rising.

An “Incident Command Team” was developed in Lansing under the supervision of **Jerry Harris, Chief, Human Resources, DNR**. Communications were centralized through this center. Local units of government are assisting with road closures, emergency coordination and firefighting.

Director Humphries noted that three to five additional fires start up in the UP per day. She commended staff on a fabulous job in handling this issue.

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Commissioner Hurley Coleman left meeting at 3:55.

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Gifford Lake Update

Director Humphries said staff met with the local government on the issue of motorized use on Gifford Lake but were not able to reach solution. The DNR does not have the authority to rescind a local ordinance and/or write an exemption to that ordinance. However, legislation could be enacted creating exemptions in the Act. Director Humphries intends to establish a work group to discuss and develop criteria on how to address this type of situation in the future that is reflective of all users.

Director’s Action Items

Ron Olson, Chief, Parks and Recreation Division, noted that proposed Land Use Order of the Director, Amendment No. 15 of 2007, was amended to allow persons with a car-top boat or pickup that brought boats into the park can park in the same area as someone with a boat trailer.

Cleveland Cliffs Iron Company, Marquette County – Administrative Consent Judgement (ACJ)

Jim Ekdahl, Resource Management Deputy, reported that the ACJ conveys land, access easements, and development funds to the DNR consisting of 16 sites and easements. The ACJ allowed Cleveland Cliffs to: facilitate long-term maintenance of completed remedial measures addressing mercury contamination in the Deer Lake Impoundment (Deer Lake); provide funding for additional remedial measures; and, minimize mercury discharges from the Cliffs Shaft Mine into Carp Creek. The amended ACJ also requires Cliffs to further mitigate mercury-related impacts to Deer Lake by enhancing recreational access to Deer Lake and neighboring waters through conveying certain land and providing public access points to these waters. In exchange, the DNR and Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) covenant not to sue Cliffs for any liabilities for Deer Lake and the Cliff’s Shaft Mine discharge. Bill Creal, DEQ, was present to address this issue from the DEQ standpoint. He commended Steve Casey, DEQ, Water Division, for working on the resolution to this issue. Discussion ensued relative to mercury remediation in Deer Lake.

Detroit State Fair and Pocket Park

Director Humphries reported that the Michigan State Fair in Detroit opens Wednesday, August 22 at 8 Mile and Woodward in Detroit and runs through Labor Day. The main Pocket Park theme this year will be Michigan's fishery resource, featuring an exhibit that includes a 24-foot fish stocking truck; and aquarium with young sturgeon, salmon, muskie and steelhead; a fisherman's boat displaying viral hemorrhagic syndrome (VHS) disease information and more. Activities at the park include the pellet gun range, archery range, and fish pond. A few MUCC clubs and several hunter education instructors will volunteer this year.

The UP State Fair in Escanaba opened August 13, and closes Saturday, August 18. Preliminary numbers indicate the fair was as well attended as in past years.

90th Anniversary Event – Interlochen State Park

Ron Olson extended an invitation to the NRC to attend the 90th Anniversary of the Interlochen State Park event on August 25 at 1:00 p.m. Local officials are also invited.

DNR Personnel Matters

Wildlife Division Chief, Dr. Bill Moritz, has accepted a position as Director of Conservation with Safari Club International.

Alan Marble will officially retire as chief of Law Enforcement Division (LED) on September 1. **Rodney Stokes** will act as chief until a permanent replacement has been chosen. **Lieutenant Tom Courchaine** will be the acting assistant Chief for Law Enforcement Division, leaving critical vacancies in LED.

Dan Eichinger will be primary lead for legislative issues while **Rodney Stokes** leads LED in an acting capacity.

Dennis Knapp will rejoin DNR's Executive Division as Assistant Resource Management Deputy on special projects and tribal issues.

Budget Update

Chairman Charters noted that the current Fiscal Year ends September 30 and asked what may be the impact if the Legislature has not established spending authority for the DNR. **Director Humphries** said that, without a budget, employees could be faced with payless paydays. If the State does have to shut down, the only employees that will remain working will be the "essential" employees to protect the health and safety of Michigan's citizens. A shutdown plan has not yet been released.

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The Committee of the Whole meeting adjourned at 4:35 p.m. The Regular meeting of the NRC convened at 4:50 p.m.

PUBLIC APPEARANCES

Jason Dinsmore, Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC)
Bud Dankers, Citizens Waterfowl Advisory Committee (CWAC)

Jason Dinsmore, MUCC, introduced **Amy Spray**, who will replace him at MUCC as Resource Policy Specialist. Jason will be leaving MUCC to attend law school.

Chairman Charters wished Jason well and thanked him for all of his contributions over the past five years. He noted that he has worked with Amy while she was employed with Public Sector Consultants on land use issues. **Chairman Charters** reviewed the following committees, workgroups, etc., of which Jason has served:

Lake Michigan Citizens Fishing Advisory Committee;
ORV Advisory Board
Private Cervid Operation Committee
Hunter Recruitment and Retention Implementation Team
Michigan Wolf Management Roundtable
Lake Huron Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee
Inland Tribal Court Ordered negotiations
Feral Swine Interagency Working Group
Furbearer and Bear User Groups

Chairman Charters requested that Jason remain on the Hunter Recruitment and Retention Implementation Team. He agreed to do so. Jason said working at MUCC and with the DNR and NRC, has been a great experience. He believes Amy Spray will do a fine job as his replacement.

Jason presented resolutions resulting from June Annual MUCC Convention.

Amy commented on some of the programs she intends to involve herself in: Teaming with Wildlife Coalition; State Wildlife Action Plan recommendations for habitat improvement and funding issues; and working with the DNR to develop a hands-on Volunteer Habitat Improvement Program; just to name a few.

Bud Dankers, CWAC, reviewed the recommendations for the 2007 CWAC waterfowl season proposals. He noted that waterfowl numbers are up this year and the season proposals reflect that. He believes it will be a good waterfowl season. **Director Humphries** thanked **Mr. Dankers** for chairing CWAC and acknowledged his efforts as Chair of CWAC.

Director Humphries noted that **Chauncy Moran** would have been at this meeting, but he is assisting in fighting the Sleeper Lake fire in the UP.

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APPROVAL OF MINUTES – JULY 12, 2007 NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION MEETING

Commissioner Brown made a motion, supported by **Commissioner Madigan**, for approval. Motion unanimously carried.

WATERFOWL AND OTHER MIGRATORY BIRD HUNTING REGULATIONS FOR 2007-2008 – WILDLIFE CONSERVATION ORDER, AMENDMENT NO. 15 OF 2007

Commissioner Madigan made a motion, supported by Commissioner Earley, for approval. Motion unanimously carried. Commissioner Madigan commended staff on the presentation made earlier on these regulations.

DIRECTOR'S ACTION ITEMS

Director Humphries stated her intent to sign all of the Director's Action Items on the Agenda.

COMMITTEE REPORT

NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries met at 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, August 16, 2007. Commissioners Madigan (Committee Chair) and Commissioner Earley, were present for the Committee. Commissioners Charters, Brown, Coleman, Richardson and Wheatlake were also present. **Mike Bailey, Wildlife Division**, presented information on the waterfowl Federal frameworks, Wildlife Division's season dates and bag limits recommendations for 2007, and discussed how the regulations-setting schedule evolves throughout the year. He outlined the current status of Michigan's waterfowl population and habitat; laid out the federal waterfowl frameworks; reviewed Wildlife Division's waterfowl season recommendations; and detailed the recommended goose managed hunt dates and bag limits. The Committee meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

Commissioner Madigan was pleased to announce he and a client caught a 47 inch trout on a recent fishing trip north of Munising.

Commissioner Wheatlake met with the Representative Dillon and Senator Bishop to discuss the DNR budget.

Commissioner Earley commended Director Humphries for her leadership during management changes and many challenges in the DNR.

Chairman Charters said even though change is inevitable, the DNR will miss Bill Moritz, who has done a tremendous job in managing staff, the public and the NRC in difficult times. His asset was his ability to balance biological and social science. Chairman Charters also acknowledged Alan Marble who has accomplished the Division's mission as staff levels decreased to all time low. He thanked Rodney Stokes for accepting the Acting Law Enforcement Division Chief position.

Chairman Charters met with Representative Dillon and Senator Bishop relative to the hunting and fishing license fee package.

The meeting adjourned at 5:21 p.m.