

## Michigan Natural Resources Commission

### **Recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee Regarding Sub-Committee Structure and Operations**

October 6, 2021

Chair Carol Rose appointed the undersigned as an ad hoc committee of the Michigan Natural Resources Commission to review the NRC's sub-committee structure and related operational issues. Input was received from all commissioners, DNR staff and other stakeholders. A preliminary report was presented at the NRC meeting of August 12, 2021, an initial recommendation was made at the meeting of September 16, 2021, and additional input was received after that. The following constitute our final recommendations.

#### Recommendations

1. Three standing committees, each comprised of three commissioners appointed by the chair, should be established at this time. (This does not preclude the creation of additional standing committees in the future.) The purpose of the committees is to identify issues, liaise with DNR staff, arrange for input from independent experts and stakeholders, review scientific literature and data, review regulatory issues within the jurisdiction of the NRC, and ensure that principles of sound scientific management are used in the NRC's decision-making process and advisory role. The standing committees we propose are:

a. Policy and Governance Committee: deal with internal governance matters, policies and procedures, annual planning, budget and finance, governmental matters involving the NRC (including reports and discussions regarding tribal matters), legal issues and litigation, and identification of issues requiring follow-up which are not within the purview of other committees.

b. Fisheries Committee: consider all matters germane to that area, including proposed fisheries orders and other related matters.

c. Wildlife Committee: consider all matters germane to that area, including proposed wildlife orders and other related matters.

2. Advisory committees, workgroups, councils and task forces have been created over the years in which the NRC has participated. Two are of particular interest. The Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee serves as an advisory committee to the NRC and the DNR. It should be continued in its current form. At least one NRC member will be assigned to the MSPAC, periodic joint meetings of the NRC and the MSPAC may be scheduled, and the MSPAC should provide

reports to the NRC regarding state park related issues including, but not limited to, hunting and fishing in our state parks. The Upper Peninsula Habitat Workgroup is a body comprised of DNR staff, NRC Commissioners, and a variety of stakeholder groups. This workgroup's focus is on conserving and improving critical Upper Peninsula winter deer habitat. It, too, should continue to function as it does now, with representation from the NRC, among others. Other existing groups with NRC representation include the Timber and Forest Products Advisory Council and the TB Advisory Committee of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, both of which should continue with NRC representation. On the other hand, the duties of the NRC Policy Committee on Finance and Administration and the Advisory Committee on Marketing, Youth and Outreach should be subsumed by the standing committees, and those committees should be dissolved.

3. Ad hoc committees should be convened by the chair from time to time, on a temporary basis, as circumstances dictate. Their work might involve areas not sufficiently covered by the standing committees such as matters involving more than one DNR division (e.g., forestry practices and wildlife habitat), emerging issues (e.g., climate change and what it means for our natural resources and regulation of fish and wildlife), etc.

4. Meetings of the committees will be open to the public. Notes or minutes of standing committee meetings will be kept by the DNR staff. It is understood that individual members of the committees may undertake their duties without the formality of a meeting. The standing committees could meet during the morning of each NRC meeting. Not all standing committees would need to meet each month. During formal committee meetings members of the DNR staff, experts and others may be invited to present information, data and scientific literature for consideration. Discourse will be limited to these individuals and the committee members. Members of the public and other commissioners will be welcome to provide input and comments at the appropriate times during the regular meeting of the NRC.

We are presented with an opportunity to improve our information gathering and decision making processes. Under Michigan law, fish and wildlife are deemed of paramount importance and part of the public trust. Hunting, fishing and trapping are to be preserved. The NRC has the exclusive authority to regulate the taking of sport fish and game. It also has the duty to advise the Director of the DNR on matters related to conservation in general. In doing so, the NRC must use principles of sound scientific management. To that end, the NRC has the authority to take testimony from department staff, independent experts and others, and to independently review scientific literature and other resources.

Over the years the NRC has appointed numerous committees, task forces and workgroups to help it accomplish these tasks. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and other reasons, those meetings were suspended, some of the groups fell into disuse, and others have served their purpose.

This gives us a chance to revise our sub-committee structure, streamline it and at the same time ensure that we have the best information available for consideration in our regulatory and advisory roles. Hopefully these recommendations will serve that purpose.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Baird, Commissioner  
Dave Cozad, Commissioner