Eastern Upper Peninsula Citizen Advisory Council
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, September 17, 2009
6:30-8:30 p.m. (EDT)
Hiawatha Sportsman’s Club – Activity Building
N7535 Millecoquins Lake Drive, Engadine, Michigan

EUP-CAC Members Present
William Becks
Tom Buckingham
Al Colegrove
Bob DeVillez
Dale DuFour
Nathan Fazer
Ginny Giddings
Lester Livermore
Glenn Moll
Richard Pershinske
Chad Radka
Steve Rodock
Jim Rutledge
Tom Schweitzer
Steve Walker

EUP-CAC Members Absent
Lisa DenBoer
Jim Duke
Fred Gregg
Mike Lawless
Doug Scheuneman

Department of Natural Resources Staff
Stacy Welling, Upper Peninsula (UP) Field Deputy, Marquette
Gary Ellenwood, Parks & Recreation, Newberry
Acting Sergeant Michael Hammill, Law Enforcement Division, Newberry
Terry Minzey, Wildlife Division, Newberry
Tim Melko, Office of Land & Facilities, Marquette
Debbie Munson Badini, Office of Communications, Marquette
Mike Paluda, Forest Mineral & Fire Management (FMFM), Marquette
Steve Scott, Fisheries Division, Newberry
Jon Spieles, Office of Communications, Newberry
Penny Bacon, Executive Division, Marquette

Call to Order:
The Eastern Upper Peninsula (EUP) Citizen Advisory Council (CAC) meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Chairman Dick Pershinske.

New Council Member:
The Council and Stacy Welling welcomed new Council member Chad Radka to the EUP-CAC. Chad said he is the resource manager for Louisiana Pacific in Newberry.
Chad will represent Michigan Society of American Foresters and is happy to help out on the Council.

**Adoption of Agenda:**
Chairman Pershinske added the bio-diversity workgroup to new business. Steve Rodock made a motion to adopt the agenda as amended. Motion supported by Dale DuFour. Ayes: All. Nays: None. Motion carried.

**Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes:**
Steve Rodock made a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Motion supported by Bill Becks. Ayes: All. Nays: None. Motion carried

**Public Comment:** - None

**Reports:**
Stacy Welling, UP Field Deputy said about a year ago the DNR and several members of the resource community started the UP CAC’s. On behalf of the Department, Stacy thanked everyone for their time and effort. Stacy emphasized the Director and the Division Chiefs made a commitment to the UP to have a designated representative from each division attend each Council meeting. They’re here to listen to the public, to provide staff reports and to answer questions. Stacy said not all of the Councils accomplishments are tangible but the Natural Resources Commissioners are asking for the CAC’s opinion; Legislators are recognizing the CAC’s, and the Division Chiefs are requesting input from the CAC’s.

- The Natural Resources Commission (NRC) will meet in Ontonagon on Thursday, October 8. As an agenda item, the NRC requested an update from the CAC’s.
  Stacy would like input and participation from the Council members with the presentation to the NRC. The UP Habitat Work Group meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 7 in Silver City.
- Merger Update: There is a draft bill that merges the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and the DNR budgets on October 1, 2009. The DNR has already absorbed parts of the History, Arts and Libraries functions. The Lieutenant Governor stated he would like to see a merger of the DEQ, DNR and Department of Agriculture. Stacy noted it costs every citizen in Michigan $1.65 per year to fund the DNR. Most of the DNR funds are restricted for specific uses, for example, funds to operate deer check stations can’t be used for public access sites.
- Pure Michigan Hunt applications went on sale July 28; to date over 7,000 applications have been sold; the application fee is $4.00; three winners will be drawn; the winners will be eligible to hunt elk, bear, turkey, antlerless deer, plus opening day reserved hunts at managed waterfowl areas.
- At the July NRC meeting, Commissioner Wheatlake asked if they should look at changing the start of the firearm deer season. He asked the Department to provide biological information and background history. The requested information was provided at the August and September NRC meetings. Of the 84 hunting seasons, 78 have opened on November 15. Stacy said by all indications, it doesn't appear the NRC will change the opening date of the firearm deer season.
- The WUP-CAC is scheduled to meet on Monday, September 28 at the Mohawk High School from 6:30-8:30 p.m. Agenda items include an update from the deer subcommittee; an update from the ORV and Snowmobile meeting; conservation license presentation from Shawn Hagan and a discussion on a hunter orange requirement on deer blinds, proposed by one of the Council members.

**Jon Spieles**, Office of Communications sent letters to about 450 groups seeking volunteers to help at the DNR Pocket Park during the UP State Fair. He said it was an amazing turnout of volunteers filling 110 volunteer shifts and 35 shifts were filled by DNR employees. The Pocket Park was opened everyday throughout the UP State Fair even on the State furlough day. He thanked the Council and the groups they represent for volunteering.

**Mike Paluda**, FMFM said they are trying to finish their timber targets for the fiscal year which ends on September 30, 2009. Their target will fall a little short mostly due to the furlough days. He said there are still some fire issues across the UP with the dry weather. They’ve been able to do some prescribed burns. They just held their annual snowmobile meetings with the clubs and cooperators. All of the snowmobile trails in the UP are maintained by clubs. He said there is an issue on Drummond Island with a state timber sale operation impacting an existing trail. The trail was supposed to be detoured during the timber operation but things didn’t go as planned. The state forest external audit is scheduled for the last part of October in the Gwinn and Baraga forest management areas. The re-certification process will take place next year.

**Tim Melko**, Office of Land and Facilities said they are focused on providing customer service to hunters.

**Debbie Munson Badini**, Communications Representative helps to manage media contacts and press releases. Since some of the local community newspapers are not on-line, Debbie asked the Council members to send her DNR stories or natural resources related articles from their local newspapers.

**Terry Minzey**, Wildlife Division said Kevin Swanson will be the new wildlife biologist assigned to Shingleton, replacing David Jentoft who transferred to Sault Ste Marie. Kevin is the Landowners Incentive Program (LIP) biologist for the WUP. Kevin will not be fully assigned to the EUP; about 25 percent of his time will be spent on the WUP private lands program. Their funding sources on public land activities are decreasing meanwhile their private land activities are increasing as grant money becomes available. David Jentoft will spend about 40 percent of his time on private land activities in Chippewa County. **Lester Livermore** asked Terry to define private land activities. Terry said LIP is a federal grant program for re-establishing mesic conifers trying to diversify some of the hardwood forests and they also have funding for a woodcock habitat project on private lands. David Jentoft is also working on a conservation innovation grant which will restore some of the grasslands in Chippewa County to make them more useful for grassland birds. For the first week of bear season, 115 bear were registered in the Newberry unit. This number is down from the 193 bears registered over the same period last year. Hunters said there was a lot of activity on bait piles until the weather got hot. Terry said there are good grouse numbers. Because of budget issues they are reducing deer check stations this year. From October 1 to November 14 and the month
of December deer checks will only take place at DNR Operations Service Centers (Baraga, Marquette, Newberry). This is due to a shortfall in the deer range improvement program (DRIP) fund. In the EUP, during the firearm deer season (except for November 26-29) deer will be checked at Shingleton, Sault Ste. Marie and Newberry. The Mackinac Bridge deer check will be open on November 16 and 17.

**Gary Ellenwood.** Parks and Recreation said the season started slow but by Labor Day usage in the EUP is comparable to 2008 and possibly 2009 will have a slight increase. The Parks and Recreation programs doesn’t receive any general fund revenue, they rely on user fees. They are considering opening Muskellunge Lake State Park to allow ORV’s to enter and exit the park only. They plan to start working on three access sites in the EUP. Two of these are new access sites; Kemps Point located right across from the south end of Neebish Island, which would provide access to the Munuscong Bay and the St. Mary’s river system and the at the mouth of the Pine River, which will provide access to Lake Huron. They plan to start working at these sites this fall with an expected completion date of about 18 months. The third site is the renovation of an access site on Drummond Island at the closed Maxton Bay state forest campground. The campground was closed years ago but the boating activity has increased at this site. They plan to start working on this site in the spring of 2010 and the site should be ready for summer use. Gary said the boat access sites are funded by boat registration fees and taxes on marine fuel. These funds are restricted and can’t be used to support other programs.

**Mike Hammill** said there have been several changes in Law Division with the recent retirements of Lt. John Cischke, Sgt. David Rantanten and Sgt. Walley Binder. He said the grouse hunters are pleased with the number of grouse this year. The bear hunters and bear numbers seem to be down. **Dale DuFour** asked for an update on the gill netting case in Bay de Noc. **Stacy Welling** said right now it’s in Tribal and Federal hands. The Department has to let that process take place but they continue to monitor the case.

**Steve Scott**, Fisheries, said crews are doing end of the year netting and stream surveys. He said the southern half of the EUP is the northern Lake Michigan basin managed out of Escanaba. Mike Herman, the Escanaba Unit Manager retired a few months ago. Due to the financial situation they are not able to fill that position. There is also a unit manager position not being filled in Newberry. Steve is assuming those duties while Jim Dexter, Lake Michigan Basin Coordinator, out of Plainwell has assumed Mike’s duties. The State of Michigan will be receiving Federal funds for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. Fisheries Division is in the process of putting together proposals to be submitted for funding from these Federal funds.

**Old Business:**
**Update on the Forestry Coalition:**
**Mike Paluda** said Amy Spray, Michigan United Conservation Clubs is the coordinator for the forestry coalition and provided this update to Mike:

- **Forestry Day at the Capitol:** About 1/3 of the House and 1/3 of the Senate offices were represented. They are drafting talking points to use in outreach to the campaign candidates to improve their knowledge of the forestry industry.
The Michigan Society of American Foresters web site provides statistics about forest industry, jobs, etc. for different parts of the State.

- **Bio-Mass Crop Assistance Program:** The first certified Michigan facility to receive biomass will be signing an agreement this month. Mike said he read an article on bio-mass energy and it referenced a study by the Nature Conservancy that was not really enthusiastic about green energy.

- **Survey of Service Providers to Non-Industrial Private Landowners (NIPL):** Surveys were sent to a number of consultants throughout the State. They received a fair amount of returned surveys but not enough. They are following up trying to get more consultants to respond to the survey.

- **Past Efforts:** Amy talked about the documents from 1989, 1998, and 2002 that addressed bringing a cooperative effort together in Michigan. The coalition agreed to dust off the plans and attempt to create a new agreement to bring the different service providers together and to provide better service to NIPL.

Bob Devillez said the Director for the Michigan Forest Association (MFA) was very enthusiastic about re-addressing the 1989 cooperative agreement and Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) that were established at that time. MFA has been very supportive of the project. Chairman Pershinske asked if there was a timetable or deadline. Bob said it's his understanding at their October meeting they will be addressing the 1989 agreement. They have a draft of the new agreement and they'll also be discussing the MOU’s and cooperative agreement between the service providers to define their roles. There is also discussion about defining the non-industrial private landowner.

**Update on the Deer Management Plan:**
Terry Minzey said the deer management plan is moving forward. The draft plan should be available to the public in January 2010 and a series of public meetings will be held throughout the State. The finalized version of the plan should be available in April. Chairman Pershinske asked if the draft plan could be made available to the Council before the public meetings. Terry will follow-up.

**March - Two Week Walleye Season:**
Steve Scott said at the CAC meeting in Curtis there was interest in the March walleye season on Big Manistique Lake. Steve didn't want to move forward until he had some data. Darren Kramer has now received the data and is in the process of analyzing it. The data includes the creel data from last winter and the data from 2003 which is the last time they did a winter creel survey. Darren will provide an update at the next meeting.

**Lake Superior Lake Trout Bag Limit:**
Steve Scott said in 2000 the State entered in to a Consent Decree with five federally recognized Tribes in Michigan for fishing in the Great Lakes. At that time, they split the catch for various species of fish between the Tribes and the State. They also agreed to use a computer model to provide for a safe harvest of fish in the 1836 Treaty area. The computer model was okay for some parts of the State but they didn't have good data to feed into the model. One area was Munising Bay; the model generated some very low harvest numbers. The allowable sports harvest was very low and the limit was exceeded in Munising Bay. As a result there were regulation changes the following year; a lower bag limit from three fish to two fish and an increased size limit. After a number of years and with improved data the sport anglers allowable catch has gone up
and up but the lake trout harvest has gone down. Doug Scheuneman who is a member of the Lake Superior Advisory Council approached Steve last year and asked him to look at increasing the lake trout bag limit to four or five. They decided to look at the lake trout regulations across Lake Superior not just Munising Bay. From the Chocolay River east they could safely increase the catch by 50 percent, from three to five fish, and not exceed their quotas. In the western units the trend data for lake trout is on decline. They are proposing to maintain the current bag limit of three fish west of the Keweenaw and east of the Keweenaw increasing the bag limit to five fish.

New Business:
State Forest Campground (SFC) Closures – Mike Paluda said forestry in Michigan started in 1926 and in 1928 the first SFC’s were developed, primarily to concentrate campers to help reduce forest fires. Historically the general fund provided funding for the SFC’s but in 2008 they only received 33 percent funding from the general fund in the amount of $800,000. The operational cost has exceeded the revenues and the campgrounds are deteriorating. To increase revenues they raised camping fees to $15 per night for rustic camping which resulted in a reduction of use. They closed some campgrounds in 2007 and in 2009, 12 more SFC’s were closed as a result of general fund cuts. In 2010, they could be faced with more reductions or no funding from the general fund. Mike said a reduction would cause massive closures. There are currently 145 SFC’s compared to 180 in the 1970’s. Chad Radka asked if a study had been done to see what users are willing to pay. Mike said he doesn’t think a study that generated that specific answer was ever done. What they’ve experienced is reduced usage as they raised the fees. It shows that people are not willing to pay the $15.00 a night at a SFC, where a private facility has more to offer and charge $15 to $20 per night. Lester Livermore asked if they are pricing themselves out of the market with what they have to offer. Jon Spieles said there is an increase in disperse camping on state land, a free option with a permit. Chairman Pershinske asked if the SFC’s could just be eliminated since there is free camping and people aren’t willing to pay the $15, Mike said if the public and the Legislators don’t want to support the SFC’s program with the general fund tax dollars, they’ll have to close a lot of campgrounds. They’re requesting criteria to evaluate the 145 SFC’s in case of closures. They closed the input on Monday, if the Council has anything to submit for consideration in this evaluation process, they need to know tomorrow.

Mike reviewed the campground assessment questionnaire with the evaluation criteria; campground quality; renovation needs, what kind of condition are they in; associated recreational activities i.e fishing, access; proximity to other campgrounds (to other SFC’s and private campgrounds in the vicinity, in the UP that circle is going to be 40 miles and 10 or 20 miles in the LP; use and occupancy; financial sustainability (how much revenue is the campground generating versus the operational cost); and should any other criteria be added. They have about 100 suggestions from the public on what other criteria should be added to the questionnaire with the most suggested criteria being ambiance. Bill Becks thinks financial sustainability should be the main criteria. Lester Livermore said the DNR campgrounds are in a competitive market with the private sector. The DNR has been out competed by the private sector. He thinks occupancy should be a factor. Jon Spieles said it’s not necessarily being out competed; there is a significant amount of data that shows people are not camping. Tom Buckingham suggested stripping out the SFC’s and allow free dispersed camping. Glenn Moll said SFC’s
should be funded by user fees and not with general tax dollars. He also feels if there was only disperse camping available it will come at a cost. Mike said the discussion is good but these comments should be provided when they have the priority list of campgrounds to be closed. Chairman Pershinske asked if certain SFC’s are closed will the public be able to provide input. Mike said when the priority list is established there will be a chance to comment. Ginny Giddings supports ambiance as a criteria. Chairman Pershinske said the Council has no specific recommendations at this time.

Wildlife Food Plots: 
Terry Minzey said at the July CAC meeting there was a discussion on hay. He said when the supplemental feeding rules were implemented most people were feeding round bales of hay. Deer will tunnel into the round bales of hay searching for alfalfa sprigs or green shoots and other deer will follow suit. This creates a micro-climate for TB bacteria to persist and CWD is also transferred through salvia. It becomes a good opportunity for disease transmission. Hay in itself may have a fairly high crude protein level because it’s very fibrous. Deer have a hard time digesting hay so the amount of usable protein because of the high fiber content isn’t that good for deer.

Food Plots: Terry Minzey said with the exception of break out areas right next to the deer yards, the value of food plots in terms of nutrition probably doesn’t add much compared to the nutritional value in the surrounding forest. The food plots have really become a resource allocation issue, getting deer to shift their activity center.

- Will wildlife become dependent on food plots? Terry said he doesn’t believe the deer will die if the food plots are not there.
- Will food plots result in the introduction of invasive species into the forest? Terry said potentially yes. They’re not concerned with turnips spreading into the forest but they’re worried about knap weed. Terry said there are certified seeds and uncertified seeds. The certified seeds are clean and don’t contain noxious weeds. Uncertified seeds are cheaper and contain noxious weeds.
- Will food plots have an impact on migration? Terry said they’ve haven’t done research but he hasn’t seen any indication that it would stop migration. Once the food plot is under two feet of snow it becomes inaccessible to the deer.
- What can you plant in food plots? The DNR doesn’t regulate private property.
- Are there restrictions regarding food plots on state land? Mike Hammill said food plots are illegal on state land under the state land use orders.

Bill Becks would like the Council to readdress supplemental feeding. He thinks supplemental feeding should be allowed across the whole UP.

Wolf Forum: Stacy Welling said the wolf forum is required as part of the wolf management plan. The group would meet annually or more frequently to discuss wolf management. Chairman Pershinske said he was asked by the Michigan Farm Bureau to be their representative on the forum. The charge of the forum is to review the wolf management plan and make changes to the plan as needed.

Bio-Diversity: Stacy Welling said Sherry MacKinnon can provide more information on the bio-diversity workgroup. Sherry can be reached at 293-5131. Bio-diversity is part of the forest certification and September 26 is the deadline to nominate sites. Steve
Walker added the basic concept of this group is to identify areas that represent a type of environment.

Next Meeting:
The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, December 10 from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. in Newberry. Location to be determined.

Public Comment:
Bob Nelson said he is fan of the SFC’s. He feels there are going to be more closures and it’s extremely important how we view these closures. He hopes they will be viewed as temporary closures only.

Council Members Closing Comments:
Tom Schwietzer heard the DNR is going to require a stamp to pick blueberries. Stacy Welling said some user groups have proposed user fees for activities on State land but it’s not something the Department is proposing.

Steve Rodock said the Ruffed Grouse Society, UP Chapter held their third annual youth hunt, 22 kids participated; they shot sporting clays and hunted birds behind bird dogs. He thanked Al Colegrove and his club for supporting their youth hunt.

Meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.