MINUTES
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION
July 12, 2018
Lansing Community College
515 North Washington Square
Lansing, MI 48933

Present for the Natural Resources Commission
Vicki Pontz, chair
J.R. Richardson, vice-chair
John Walters
Rex Schlaybaugh
Louise Klarr
Christine Crumbaugh
Chris Tracy

Present for DNR staff
Daniel Bock, legal counsel, Office of the Attorney General
Keith Creagh, director
Bill Moritz, special projects
Trevor VanDyke, legal/legislative director
Stacy Welling Haughey, UP coordinator
Brooke Parmalee, legislative assistant
Cheryl Nelson, executive assistant to the NRC

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair Vicki Pontz called the Committee of the Whole meeting to order at 1:03 p.m.

Director’s Report

Law Enforcement Division Lifesaving Awards: Officers Andrea Albert and Steve Butzin
Law Enforcement division chief Gary Hagler presented lifesaving awards to conservation officers (COs) Andrea Albert and Steve Butzin. Conservation officers Albert and Butzin saved two people who lost control of the snowmobile they were riding on and fell into the Jordan River and nearly drowned. Both victims have fully recovered from their injuries. Chief Hagler and Director Creagh thanked both COs for a job well done.

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Regulations
Deputy director Bill O’Neill, deer, elk and moose specialist Chad Stewart, wildlife division assistant chief Steve Chadwick and marketing and outreach division chief Kristin Phillips presented a CWD response overview to the commission. Chad Stewart of Wildlife recapped deer regulations, aimed at addressing chronic wasting disease in Michigan’s deer herd. The regulations include:
A statewide ban on the use of all natural cervid urine-based lures and attractants, except for lures that are approved by the Archery Trade Association.

- An immediate ban on baiting and feeding in the 16-county area identified as the CWD management zone. This includes three counties that were added to the previous 13-county management zone as a result of finding an additional CWD-positive deer in Jackson county. The additional counties are Jackson, Calhoun and Hillsdale.

- A ban on baiting and feeding in the Lower Peninsula, effective January 31, 2019, with an exception to this ban for disabled hunters. The start date on this regulation is intended to allow bait producers and retailers time to adjust to the new rule.

- Allowing all legal firearms to be used in muzzleloader season in the 16-county CWD management zone.

- Carcass movement restrictions in a five-county CWD core zone.

- Antlerless options on deer licenses/combo licenses during firearms seasons in the five-county CWD core zone.

- Expansion of early and late antlerless seasons in select counties.

- Rehabilitation regulations.

These proposed regulations will be voted on at the August 9 commission meeting.

The department’s surveillance goal in the 16-county management zone is to take 15,035 deer to help determine where CWD exists. In addition, the wildlife division is looking to collect 600 plus deer in the western-most counties of the Upper Peninsula (UP), mostly using crop damage control permits during the summer.

Steve Chadwick of the wildlife division talked about the department’s surveillance strategy. The department has found that compliance with mandatory deer check decreases as time goes on. The department’s proposed surveillance plan would rely on voluntary hunter compliance and seek to collect samples where the department knows where hunters are located; by working directly with meat processors and taxidermists; expanding check stations in the 16-county management zone; and establishing drop boxes where hunters can leave deer heads and fill out information.

Marketing and Outreach Chief Kristin Phillips talked about the department’s CWD communications strategy, which will be critical to success of CWD management. The topline messages:

- The DNR is taking deliberate actions – and we need your help.
- We want you to keep hunting – you are an important deer manager.
- Get your deer tested – there are many options.
- Be responsible with carcass movement and disposal.

Deputy director Bill O’Neill presented goals, metrics and measures the department plans to use to determine the success of our CWD strategy. Goals include:

Goal 1: monitoring harvest and license trends: monitoring trends in harvest and license sales both within and outside the CWD zone.
Goal 2 and 3: determine the geographic distribution through a risk-based surveillance effort. Both antlered and antlerless harvest will be monitored. Meet harvest goal of one to one buck to doe ratio measured a: deer management units (DMU).

Goal 4: to measure awareness of CWD regulations; raise stakeholder awareness for CWD and monitor that information through a participant survey. Stakeholder trust in the department’s management must also be monitored. The number of deer tested in each geographic area while meeting timely goals related to results. The surveillance goals include keeping track of the number of deer tested in each geographic area.

Goal 5: increase CWD knowledge and research. The department has secured funding for this year. Funding will be directed towards these priorities.

The department will be coming forward in August with a CWD package for action.

These are designed to measure progress on our primary management goals:

- Preserve deer hunting opportunities for future generations
- Slow the spread of disease
- Maintain low prevalence rate
- Continue a strong and transparent communication process
- Fill information gaps in our knowledge of CWD science and management

Stewart shared information on the newly found positive deer in Jackson county and the possible changes that will be brought forward next month. He also provided information to the commissioners previously-asked questions on increased antlerless quotas, allowing archery hunters opportunities with the six DMUs noted in the currently open UP-five, and the addition of DMU 022.

Regarding the alignment of CWD and bovine tuberculosis (TB); the department would like to see the overall impact of CWD regulations prior to implementation elsewhere as TB is a different disease to manage. There is an agreement with the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) to remain consistent between management boundaries and agencies. Creagh added that there are risk assessment teams to look at additional biosecurity, additional co-ops, Wildlife Services going on farms shooting additional deer, several other things we have committed to do differently because of Dr. O’Brien’s information. There is a more-focused interface between agencies in northeastern Michigan.

Schlaybaugh asked if there will be specific harvest goals, O’Neill responded that would. O’Neill also added that there will be discussion regarding the metrics of deer tested in each geographical area and expansion in testing other areas. The public should expect the first report on metrics before the August commission meeting. Chair Pontz thanked the group and their staffs for their efforts working on this issue.

Legislative Report Anna Mooney, legislative liaison of the Legal and Legislative office provided a written report of legislation related to the department.
Committee Reports:

**NRC Marketing, Partnership, Youth and Outreach Advisory Committee:** Commissioner Tracy shared that the committee received a report on DNR pathways and students/careers. They also received a preliminary report on the upcoming 100th anniversary of state parks in 2019. The tagline: "look back give forward" was established. In addition, they received a report on department’s use of drones. Tom Weston reported on Warden’s TV program; there are nine more shows, we will also get snippets that we can use for our future marketing purposes.

**NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries:** Commissioner Schlaybaugh said that the committee received a report from fisheries assistant chief Todd Grischke which included an updates on the Atlantic salmon stocking program, walleye planting, the challenging weather and the damage to the research boat on Lake Superior. The committee was told of the award received for excellence in conservation for wildlife and marketing and they received a report on the Sharonville state game area from Dennis Tison on the effectiveness achieved assisting disabled persons to hunt.

PUBLIC APPEARANCES BEFORE THE NRC
(Stacy Welling Haughey read the official timekeeping procedures and guidelines for the meeting’s public appearances which began at 2:56 p.m.)

Ed Beckley from Losco county told the commission that the sale of deer feed is a large part of his business and that he does not want to see a ban on baiting and feeding in the state. He does not think that baiting bans will work in combatting CWD and that the disease is politically-driven. Pontz asked about his statement on the disease being politically-driven, Beckley responded that the biologists want to make a name for themselves.

Mel Smith from Montcalm county, is a member of many stakeholder groups, who believe antler point restrictions (APRs) will help increase the number of antlerless deer taken. He suggested looking at the ages of deer that have had the disease to see where the prevalence is. Smith would like real-time information, this way the department would get information quicker, and hunters would get information back quicker and would be able to provide more assistance. Smith doesn’t want sharp-shooters, does not have an opinion on a bait ban, but sees how it could affect the producers, and does believe that carcass movement needs to be contained. What if he buys his license in a core area, but gets a deer in the NW12, takes back to processor who will not process because tag says from core area. Smith would like to see the state and American flag at future commission meetings.

Tom Blackford from Newaygo county and the Newcosta co-op talked about APRs as a tool to combat CWD. Blackford would like to see statewide mandatory APRs that will allow younger bucks to make it to better age structure and a better, healthier deer herd. Blackford said that 77 percent of Michigan hunters want APRs. He talked about the human element to CWD, use APRs as a carrot to get hunters to take more antlerless deer; they need to be reduced on the landscape. Blackford would like to see the use of technology and real-time data. If we don’t give the hunters some incentive the hunters will not shoot antlerless deer. He would rather see hunters stay in the state to hunt.
Matthew Greenhoe and Trent Christianson own property in Ionia county and lease property in Montcalm county, and are QDMA and Fish Creek QDMA co-op members. They would like statewide and by county goals, along with statewide APRs; they feel that the deer herd could be better managed by increasing the doe harvest. Greenhoe’s opinion is that APRs would give hunters incentive to shoot more antlerless deer.

Erik Schnelle, president, Michigan QDMA and Kip Adams QDMA director of conservation came before the commission to share their thoughts on how to best move forward to best manage the disease. Herd management is the biggest issue facing the state, the sooner we harvest more antlerless deer will be better for the state. Adams talked about a three-tiered approach and thinks that there is a danger in adding seasons. Calculating a targeted harvest by DMU, clearly communicate numbers to the public and education for the public. If hunters don’t help in achieving the antlerless goal by using APRs then this method could be taken away.

Erik Schnelle added that QDMA is willing to work to help manage disease in Michigan. Best proof is the work they are already doing on the ground with the department. Antler point restrictions would make them even more motivated to do the necessary work and apply to the TB area as well and get the Thumb area APRs moving where there is no disease.

Chair Pontz asked about QDMA’s policy on baiting and feeding; Adams said that they support it as long as there are no-known disease issues. Schlaybaugh asked about their support in the face of the APR goals not being met; Adams’ response was that QDMA would support taking those APRs away.

Jim Sweeney, representing The Concerned Sportsmen of Michigan, said that it is necessary to retain Michigan’s rich hunting heritage. Sweeney provided the commissioners with a recommendation document on modification of the restrictions on the possession and use of natural cervid-based lures and attractants, a baiting exception, changing the boundaries on the CWD management zone, baiting restriction and feeding ban, creation of a new private-land license at a reduced cost, provide an early antlerless firearm opportunity, opening muzzleloader season to all firearms in the 29 county CWD management zone, the establishment of a three-county core CWD area, making antlered tags exempt from APR in the 29-county and TB zone, carcass transportation, late season hunts, expansion of the areas open to an early/late antlerless, and Sweeney also shared a recommendation on rehabbed deer.

John “Bear Claw” Wagner commented on a baiting ban saying that there is no evidence that a ban would constrain the spread of CWD and that he doesn’t see any numbers or science to back up such a ban.

Amy Trotter, deputy director, MUCC, said that they had a resolution at conference which is to continue to work with department and QDMA on disease management and that they support a statewide baiting ban. They are prepared to assist with education and communication to reach out to hunters. Trotter added that MUCC would like to see antlerless harvest and surveillance goals by DMU and that APRs could be an incentive to hunters. As part of metrics that should be looked at Trotter suggested contacting former hunters who may be dissatisfied and finding out why they were, this could be a strong piece of information. At the August commission meeting she would like to see the commission provide rationale for their decisions. MUCC would like to know the commission’s thought process as to why. They would like a written
record as to why those decisions are made. They would like to see numbers prior to the public comment period in August.

**Dan Eichinger**, director, MUCC, said that they want to see focus on removing antlerless deer; how can antlerless harvest be increased. They would like to see antlerless harvest goals and surveillance goals established for each DMU. **Eichinger** said that APRs should be considered for its potential benefits to sustain hunter engagement with the overall strategy. MUCC provided a written list of specific recommendations for the approach shared with the commission. Lastly, **Eichinger** thanked **Pontz** and **Creagh** for attending and addressing MUCC members at their recent annual conference.

**Dave Buikema** is in agreement that deer densities need to be lowered and wondered just how that could be accomplished. He suggested trying something different; would like to see harvest goals in each DMU. **Buikema** would like to see trial areas for APRs and believes that more antlerless deer with the higher propensity for disease would be taken. He said that the hunters in his area are motivated to work with the department.

**Bill Bledsoe** would like to have an app or a call-in system to keep track of hunter goals. He thinks the pricing on shooting deer, buck or antlerless should not be the same; if the department wants hunters to shoot more antlerless the price for those tags should be lower. **Bledsoe** said that if APRs were implemented he would shoot more antlerless deer at the same pricepoint as bucks. There are many hunters want to work with the DNR, but they are also a customer and the department needs to take care of their customers. **Bledsoe** added that there should not be a four-day gun season during the archery season. He said that the department needs to give incentives, offer APRs, drop antlerless tag prices. **Bledsoe** closed by saying that he loves our country and that it would be nice to see a flag at the commission meetings.

**Tony Smith**, president of Eaton county QDMA and a member of MUCC shared some comparative data on the ratio of bucks to antlerless deer and available tags vs. tags sold comparison. **Smith** said that there are many more antlerless tags sold when APRs are in place. Regulations are a tool to change behavior and drive certain harvests within the herd, APRs are no different.

**Jeff Anthes**, from the Bacon Creek Co-op said that their members work together, hunt together, and educate each other. **Anthes** said that QDMA is big on education, and they have a large amount of data and have done many studies on deer. This is where the department needs help. He wants APRs, he wants education, he wants the opportunity. **Anthes** and his co-op want to work with the department and want the department to work with them.

**Bernie Shaver** agrees with carcass disposal recommendation. He said that baiting allows too much of an advantage to a hunter and suggested a tiered level approach in different zones. **Shaver** believes that APRs should be removed from CWD management zone; yearling bucks do have prevalence, it can exacerbate the disease. He would like to shoot more deer than what his family can use and asked if there could be an easier, less expense way to donate deer.

**Josh Hillyard**, regional director of QDMA, thanked **Brian Murphy** for attending last month and **Kip Adams** for his attendance at the day’s meeting. Primarily hunters tell him they would like a better quality hunting experience. **Hillyard** believes that QMDA’s proposal can give a quality hunting experience, even in the face of disease. The proposal using APRs will keep hunters
engaged. **Hillyard** added that their members are very passionate hunters who are willing to work with the department to help combat CWD.

**George Quackenbush**, executive vice president of the Michigan Cattlemen’s Association, expressed his support of the department’s proposed CWD regulations. He commended the commission and the department for the deliberate, thorough and transparent process used to gather all the relevant scientific information available on the disease. **Quackenbush** would like to see the CWD recommendations be expanded to the TB area. He would like the commission to consider the concept of wildlife disease management regulations rather than separating regulations and managing for each specific disease. **Quackenbush** also asked the commission to consider establishing an 11-county TB management zone that would include the counties bordering the core TB area.

**Tim Liponoga**, president of the Cadillac QDMA branch in the NW 12 zone shared a proposal for APRs; a possible addendum promote make hunters pass on only 50% of yearling deer of the usual 16% and take half of that to have 8% for an any-buck drawing. The application would have appropriate fee, a preference point system should be used for youth, elderly, veterans, disabled hunters, and for those who were not successful in the previous year. This would allow hunters to hunt as usual if they choose to apply and retain the license. Also the tag for this license would be different from the regular deer tag. **Liponoga** said that this would give bring compromise to conflicted hunters and give both sides some of what they are looking for. He will be vetting this proposal with MUCC to bring back in the future. **Commissioner Tracy** thanked him for being creative and thinking out of the box.

**Chad Garlinghouse**, a member of Let ‘em Go, Let ‘em Grow was taught as a Michigan hunter, if you don’t shoot the first buck you see, someone else will shoot it. It’s not a good tradition. He believes it is not a tradition, hunters shoot the first one out of fear. **Garlinghouse** eluded that Michigan hunters are unhappy, that they want as a majority, better quality hunting, which he feels can be achieved with APRs.

**Rick Garlinghouse** said that this will be his fiftieth year of hunting deer in Michigan. Has hunted all throughout the state, but when he wants to get a big buck he goes out of state. **Garlinghouse** stated that hunters and hunting can be kept in Michigan if APRs are implemented. He suggested trying this approach and if it is unsuccessful, the regulations can be changed.

**Sean Dagenhart** is part of QDMA in the NW12 and a farmer who stated that his farmland could produce the best bucks due to him practicing quality deer management. **Dagenhart** would like a good quality Michigan deer herd. He wants to see the hunting money stay in Michigan and suggested trying APRs for, if that doesn’t work, go back to the drawing board.

**Fred Flower** talked about the Barry county conservation district regarding the new bridge over Cedar creek that was made possible with grant monies; they got a new bridge and a greatly improved stream by thinking outside of the box. **Flower** said that QDMA wants to partner with the commission and the department by thinking outside of the box to work on the CWD issue. He added that education is key.

**Dale Hendershot** from Michigan Trapper and Predator Callers Association wanted to clarify what was said at the June meeting regarding commissioner **Richardson’s** question on the
Houndsmen’s support of one bobcat on private land, Hendershot said that the group was not in agreement, they were neutral. With regard to the Sharonville state game area and dog training, there is a concern as the map doesn’t match the signage, some of the area is actually on dog-training grounds, if people go there they will need to know people are out training dogs. He also spoke about having an issue with permits, the process goes through two people and there is a long turn-around time. He asked if it could be streamlined. Hendershot also suggested that there be field trial grounds in northern Michigan on both east and west sides. Commissioner Richardson thanked Hendershot for making the correction to the record. Director Creagh suggested that he speak with chief Mason regarding the Sharonville permits.

Craig Brandt has supplied deer feed-culled carrots, for over 60 years. It is about 30% of their overall business and without that business he feels they may lose their farm. Brandt asked if the commission could do only a county by county ban of bait, not statewide. He would like a workable solution for everyone.

Jeff Hulet, a member of Let ‘em Go, Let ‘em Gro and Michigan Bow Hunters has been a bow hunter since the age of four, doesn’t like the idea of having guns out during bow season. He has been a part of a Kalkaska county co-op that practices APRs, three on a side and taking antlerless when they feasibly could. When they took antlerless they started seeing bigger bucks. Hulet’s opinion is that APRs work.

Mark Lemla/Wayne Steerzer reminded the commission of their request for APRs in the thumb area. They would like to see a statewide APRs but suggested using the thumb area for a pilot. They are currently disease free and want to stay that way.

Chair Pontz adjourned the public appearances portion of the meeting at 5:02 p.m. and called to order the regular meeting of the NRC at 5:03 p.m. She noted that all commissioners who were present at the Committee of the Whole were present for the regular meeting.

REGULAR MEETING OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

FOR INFORMATION ONLY - NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

Pontz reviewed the items up for information only.

Chronic Wasting Disease Regulations, Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 12 of 2018

Commissioner Pontz indicated that the commission would like to request that the department bring an updated proposed order for action in August with the following changes: Remove October early antlerless firearm opportunity in the CWD management zone. Include Jackson, Calhoun and Hillsdale counties to the CWD management zone.

Commissioner Richardson asked the department to prepare an amendment for consideration in August that would resume the antlerless option for archers on the combo tag in the five UP DMUs that are currently open to antlerless harvest, and open DMU 022, which is currently closed.
Commissioner Walters would like the department to prepare a director’s letter for consideration in August that replicates the new CWD private land antlerless license at a reduced cost that expires the first Sunday in November in DMU 487, also including DMU 452.

Commissioner Schlaybaugh asked that the department prepare amendments for the following: Expand the restriction on carcass transportation to include the rest of the CWD management zone (eight counties). The department should respond if it should include the additional three counties (Jackson, Hillsdale, and Calhoun) unless tested or deboned. Require a lottery license that has been granted to expire if not purchased by November 1 and allow it to be reissued over the counter. Implementation of an APR against a targeted antlerless harvest goal set by DMU in the CWD management zone with the opportunity for the department to evaluate whether they would suggest the three counties (Jackson, Hillsdale, and Calhoun) be included. He encouraged the department and parties to discuss how that would be implemented with an understanding that if harvest objectives are not met the APR would be eliminated from the CWD management zone.

Commissioner Tracy asked that the department prepare amendments for the following: Remove APRs on the combo license for the CWD management zone, leaving it up to the department if that should be the 13 or 16 counties and if it should be replicated in the TB zone.

Commissioner Crumbaugh asked that the department prepare amendments for the following: change the restriction on carcass transportation from the five-county core CWD area to any of the counties that have been detected with CWD and that the carcass cannot be moved to or through any county that CWD has not been detected. Implement a feeding ban in the CWD management zone and a baiting ban in the counties that CWD has been detected and have a two-gallon shelled corn limit in the remaining counties of the CWD management zone.

Chair Pontz added that she was dismayed that CWD has the potential to severely impact our deer herd and hunting heritage and that so much focus has been on APRs, taking away from the true issue. A hunting style is taking our focus away from disease management, perhaps wasting an opportunity to come together.

*Expand Hunting at Mari Lake Property at South Higgins Lake State Park During the Established Open Seasons, Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 13 of 2018*

*Pierce Road Unit Special Hunt Opportunities at the Sharonville State Game Area, Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 14 of 2018*

**NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION ACTION ITEMS**

**Approval of Minutes, June 14, 2018 Natural Resources Commission Meeting**

Commissioner Tracy made a motion that the minutes of the June 14, 2018 NRC meeting be approved. Commissioner Walters supported the motion. Pontz called for discussion, there being none, a vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.
Antlerless Deer License Quotas

Commissioner Schlaybaugh moved that Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 11 of 2018, Antlerless Deer License Quotas be adopted. Commissioner Crumbaugh supported the motion. Pontz called for discussion, there being none, a vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

FOR INFORMATION ONLY – DIRECTOR

Director Creagh listed the “for information only” items on the agenda.

DIRECTOR’S ACTION ITEMS

Director Creagh listed the “director’s action” items on the agenda and indicated he would approve all items.

COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Commissioner Schlaybaugh spent some time with commissioner Walters and Wayne and Luke Sitton. He spent time in Grayling with concerned anglers on fish decline on the north branch of the Au Sable. Schlaybaugh also spent a couple of days on Beaver island and stated that the state’s great natural resources never cease to amaze him.

Commissioner Walters has spoken with many and received a true education on deer management on how to address disease. He thanked all for that education. He spoke with beaver trappers on nuisance trapping issues and working with wildlife to make things better for the trappers. He also spent time with folks at Turtle lake to see how and what they are doing and added that it was very impressive. He said that the Timber Advisory Council is doing some remarkable things including giving a report to Governor Snyder in September. He thanked commissioner Richardson for taking him under his wing. The following day he was scheduled to meet with fisheries division and Department of Environmental Quality staff in Gaylord regarding the trout decline in the Au Sable.

Commissioner Crumbaugh thanked all for the communications throughout the month on the CWD issue.

Commissioner Richardson attended a Timber Advisory Council meeting with good metrics coming out of managing Michigan forests. He met with the UP Habitat work group in Wisconsin where the conversation turned to CWD.

Commissioner Tracy shared the continued discussion on the Outdoor Recreation Advisory Council and noted that the September meeting will be held at Crystal Mountain. In the coming months he will furnish reports on the recent confluence in Asheville, NC.

Director Creagh said that in June the severe storms in the UP caused $20 million damage to trails, from Chassel to Calumet. Dedicated staff have spent many hours at emergency centers or incident command. There were additional storms the night before this July meeting. The total damage caused has been surreal. Creagh said that it had been a tough spring in UP and thanked staff for putting in the long hours.
Chair Pontz attended MUCC's annual meeting, spent time Dr. Bill Porter on research being done in the NW12. She had a radio interview with Mike Avery that was centered around the decision-making process between the department and the commission.

Next Meeting

Chair Pontz announced that the next meeting of the NRC is scheduled for Thursday, August 9, 2018 at Lansing Community College, 515 N. Washington Square, Lansing. The committees meeting in August will be the Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee and the NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries.

Adjournment

Commissioner Schlaybaugh made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Crumbaugh seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 5:22 p.m.

APPROVED: Date: August 9, 2018

Vicki Pontz, NRC Chair

Keith Creagh, DNR Director