

MINUTES

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION *Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee (MSPAC)*

April 10, 2014
MSU Diagnostic Center
Lansing, Michigan

PRESENT FOR THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

Commissioner Louise Klarr, Chair
Commissioner Tim Nichols, Co-Chair
Commissioner Vicki Pontz, Co-Chair

PRESENT FOR THE MSPAC

Julie Clark
Mike Foote
Chris Graham
Jefferson Gray, via Conference Call
Jim Hendricks
Bob Hoffmeyer, via Conference Call
Mike McDonald
Mary Pitcher
Amy Trotter

ABSENT

Tom Bailey
Jim Bradley
Ann Conklin
Tom Ferguson

OTHERS PRESENT

Commissioner J. R. Richardson
Al DeClerq, Saginaw Field & Streams
Three participants of the Quality of Life Leadership Academy
Other DNR Management and Staff

MICHIGAN STATE PARKS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (MSPAC)

INTRODUCTIONS

Commissioner Nichols called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Commissioner Klarr then took roll call, made introductions around the room and asked if there were any additions or adjustments to the agenda. No adjustments to the agenda were offered.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Commissioner Klarr asked if anyone present or from the general public would like to address the committee at this time. No comments were offered but Klarr requested that the public comment portion on the agenda be moved to the end of the meeting after all information and presentations have been made.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Klarr asked if the committee had any edits, changes or discussion regarding the draft Minutes from the February 13, 2014 meeting. No comments or edits were offered.

Commissioner Nichols motioned to approve the Minutes; McDonald seconded the motion; the motion unanimously carried and the February 13, 2014 Minutes were approved and adopted.

GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLANS

Deb Jensen, Park Management Plan Administrator, announced that she had two park management plans that were the first two plans developed using the new streamlined process. The new process combines phases one and two of the management planning process and improves the public input process.

Chris Graham, chair of the MSPAC's Stewardship Subcommittee, reported that the subcommittee was thoroughly briefed on both plans on March 12, 2014, and fully supported moving them forward to the full committee for review and approval.

Tawas Point State Park

Jensen presented an overview of the general management plan for Tawas Point State Park and highlights of the 200+ acre park. The historical Tawas Point Lighthouse complex and museum is the first to introduce the Lighthouse Keepers program. Tawas Point State Park receives 30,000 plus visitors annually, has 193 modern campsites, four cabins, two shipwrecks that sit off the shoreline, a pet-friendly beach and is the site of the annual migratory bird festival where 297 species of birds have been observed. The park also has the Sandy Hook Nature Trail that connects to the 14-mile long Tawas Bay Pedestrian Trail and the Huron Shores Heritage Route, and the Tawas Blueway identifies water trail routes that begin and end at the park. Tawas Point State Park is full to capacity from Memorial Day to Labor Day, the two mini-cabins are open year-round, and the day use areas are full every weekend.

Commissioner Pontz commented that she runs the leadership program every year and Tawas Point State Park is always the first park they visit. She complimented the park supervisors, the staff and the park interpreters as being very welcoming and very helpful.

Committee member Chris Graham commented that he would like to see the department reach out to the Tawas Bay Beach Club (owners north of the park) to let them know we are interested in purchasing the property if the opportunity ever came up, or discuss a possible partnership (i.e. parking) and recommendation to improve access/flow into the park (i.e. one-way road). Jensen replied that she will reach out to the club.

Commissioner Klarr asked for a motion on Resolution 04-2014-01 Recommending Approval of the Tawas Point State Park General Management Plan. Mary Pitcher motioned to support the

Resolution; Julie Clark seconded the motion; the motion unanimously carried and Resolution 04-2014-01 was approved and adopted.

Wilderness State Park

Jensen then gave an overview of the general management plan for Wilderness State Park and highlights of the over 10,500 acre park. Wilderness State Park receives 245,000 visitors annually, has 26 miles of shoreline on Lake Michigan, two modern campgrounds, six rustic cabins, three rustic bunkhouses, backcountry camping, and a 23 mile trail system including 11 miles of the North Country Trail. The park also provides a variety of different fishing and hunting opportunities for northern Michigan game, and offers a diverse array of dedicated natural areas and designated areas of environmental importance, providing exceptional educational value.

Discussions ensued regarding the park and the plan.

Commissioner Klarr asked for a motion on Resolution 04-2014-02 Recommending Approval of the Wilderness State Park General Management Plan. Amy Trotter motioned to support the Resolution; Mike Foote seconded the motion; the motion unanimously carried and Resolution 04-2014-02 was approved and adopted.

The committee offered suggestions for future park management plans to include:

- Adding friends of the parks to these presentations/plans.
- Highlight the local and surrounding communities in the supporting analysis, which shows the park setting and how it sits among the community.
- The economic benefits to the community, etc.
- Complete and include an economic analysis based on the National Park Service's model.
- Estimates on the number of park users and how much money is contributing to the communities.
- Moving these important facts and data to the front of the plans.
- Add historical information as to historical improvements that have been made to the park, improvements moving forward and cost estimates.

Jensen commented that after phase I the process is to move into an action plan or five year implementation plan. This is where the plans get into more detail regarding infrastructure, repairs, funding, etc. This is where they can start incorporating capital outlay needs, dollar amounts and data into the plans.

The committee also commented that there is over a \$330 million need throughout the state for park infrastructure needs. They would like to start receiving regular updates on an ongoing basis, to include best estimates as plans are developed and how much it would cost to implement the plans, park upgrades, and infrastructure improvements park-by-park.

Chief Olson agreed that the DNR Parks and Recreation Division can provide periodic updates, to include the cost estimates for all the parks at least on a quarterly or bi-annual basis, to include the 5-year capital outlay plan and critical needs.

Jensen then reminded the committee that the Phase 2 Long Range Action Goals Plans for the Bald Mountain and Island Lake Recreation Areas were included in their packets for their information only. No action is required on the Phase 2 action plans and they do not require approval by the Director. Graham reported that the subcommittee was also briefed on these

two plans and were in full support of the DNR Parks and Recreation Division moving forward on these two action plans.

The committee thanked Deb for her thorough presentations and applauded her on the extensive work, research, public input and detail she puts into the park management plans.

PARKS AND RECREATION BUDGET OVERVIEW

Jacklin Blodgett, Program Services Section Chief, gave the committee a thorough overview of the Parks and Recreation Division's funding sources, the fiscal year 2014 Park Endowment and Park Improvement Fund revenue and appropriations, Recreation Passport sales through February 2014, a brief outline of what is being proposed in the Governor's Fiscal Year 2015 budget. She also provided information about other division programs and their funding sources, including the Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) and snowmobile programs, watercraft and gas tax revenue and waterways funding, cross-country ski pathways, equestrian trails, and the increase in the ORV license and trail usage fees.

The committee was also provided information in their meeting packets on a Summary of Identified Capital Outlay Improvement Projects, a Fiscal Year 2014 Capital Outlay Final Project List, and information about the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Fund (PR), the Dingell Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Fund (DJ), and the License Fee Acquired Lands (LF) and the varying limitations and restrictions each carry as to how the lands can be utilized.

Questions were raised and discussion ensued regarding some of the funding sources and what this committee can do to reach out to key sponsors or legislators regarding park infrastructure, funding needs, and legislation that may have an effect on programs, and the continued focus on diverting dollars from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund.

Olson recommended reaching out to key sponsors via phone calls, e-mails, working with or through the Michigan United Conservation Corp and the Michigan Recreation and Park Association, of which two members of each organization sit on this committee.

Director Creagh had entered the room and recommended reaching out to the house and senate appropriations committee chairs, and Rep. LaFontaine regarding the trust fund.

A list of the house and senate appropriation committees, subcommittees and their chairs/members will be sent to the parks committee members.

The committee reiterated that they would like to receive more budget and legislative updates as legislation is introduced or as issues arise, to include capital outlay and infrastructure reports.

Olson noted that the issue of fat tire bikes will be an emerging issue that will affect trails and trail grooming.

Committee member Julie Clark informed the committee that a public hearing is being held on the Vasa Trail on April 28, 2014 at 5:30 p.m.

PARKS AND RECREATION UPDATES

Belle Isle Update

Chief Olson provided a brief update on the status and activities that have and are taking place on Belle Isle, and noted that information about the Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee, its membership and meeting dates is also enclosed in their meeting packets.

Outdoor Adventure Center Contributions

Chief Olson noted that information pertaining sponsorship and funding opportunities is contained in their meeting packets. A thorough update on the Outdoor Adventure Center will be provided at the next meeting.

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund

Steve DeBrabander, DNR Grants Management Section Manager, was asked to come back to this committee to talk about the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF), provide an update on current legislation and the two new subcommittees created under the MNRTF Board.

DeBrabander gave the committee an overview of the MNRTF and talked about proposed legislation that affects the fund. He also mentioned that the MNRTF Board just created two new subcommittees. The Funding and Finance Subcommittee will focus on how we partner with other programs and foundations within the state to consider the possibility of partnerships and combining funds where there are mutual goals. They will also be looking at ways to get the trails system in the state completed at a faster pace, and foundations that may be interested in helping local units of government that have been hit hard economically to help those communities meet their match requirement. The Program Review Subcommittee will be looking at everything from board priorities (i.e. trails, projects in urban areas, etc.), the scoring system, working economic impact into how grant awards are determined, and working more closely with the prosperity regions to promote more collaboration with the regions and the state. Steve further commented that they will be inviting stakeholders as they work through evaluating the program, including members of this committee.

Discussion ensued regarding the status of the fund and how this committee can assist with addressing legislation and the process, and the fact that any change to the Trust Fund would require a constitutional change and a vote of the people.

DeBrabander closed by stating that not many other states have a trust fund program like ours. We are the envy of most states.

Commissioner Richardson suggested that the department take the opportunity to identify communities that have benefited from receiving trust fund and Recreation Passport grants, especially when the trust fund is at threat. DeBrabander reported that the trust fund web site has a history of the fund and every grant ever issued.

WORK SESSIONS

Commissioner Klarr recommended this committee start focusing heavily on 2014 priorities and a work plan. This committee may have to schedule a ½ day work session, either by conference call or off schedule from the regular meeting dates.

The June meeting is being postponed to July 9 and will be held on Belle Isle.

The committee adjourned at 11:45 a.m.