



Michigan State Waterways Commission: Teleconference Meeting

August 26, 2020

ROLE CALL

PRESENT FOR THE WATERWAYS COMMISSION

Commissioner, Vice Chair, Steve Arwood
Commissioner, Secretary, Mary Rising
Commissioner, Barb Brooks
Commissioner, Pete Beauregard
Commissioner, Elaine Isely
Commissioner, Pat Egan

OTHERS PRESENT

Ron Olson, DNR
Jackie Blodgett, DNR
Vicki McGhee, DNR
Jordan Byelich, DNR
Paul Petersen, DNR
Linnae Dawson, DNR
Michael Desnoyer, DNR
Michelle Wieber, DNR, Recorder

GUEST SPEAKER

Rich Hill, Gaylord District Supervisor, DNR

ABSENT

Commissioner, Chair, Dennis Nickels
Maia Turek, DNR



MINUTES

OPENING COMMENTS

Vice-Chair, Steve Arwood called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m., August 26, 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this meeting was held virtually. The meeting began with reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC APPEARANCE

Due to the virtual meeting, if there were members of the public dialed in, they did so anonymously.

ACTION ITEMS

- **MOTION:** Vice-Chair, Steve Arwood asked for a motion for approval of the minutes from the June 16, 2020 Michigan State Waterways Commission meeting. The motion was put into place by Commissioner Pete Beauregard and was seconded by Commissioner Barb Brooks. Motion carried unanimously, 5-0.
- **MOTION:** Vice-Chair, Steve Arwood asked for a motion for approval of the revised minutes from the April 30, 2020 Michigan State Waterways Commission meeting. The motion was put into place by Commissioner Barb Brooks and was seconded by Commissioner Elaine Isely. Motion carried unanimously, 5-0.
- **MOTION:** Vice-Chair Steve Arwood asked for a motion for approval in support of resolution number 08-2020-01, Resolution of Support for FY2021 Waterways Capital Outlay Funding Plan. The motion was put into place by Commissioner Barb Brooks and was seconded by Commissioner Pete Beauregard. Motion carried unanimously, 6-0.
- **MOTION:** Vice-Chair Steve Arwood asked for a motion for approval in support of resolution number 08-2020-02, Resolution of Support to Honor Commissioner, Steve Arwood, for his time served on the Michigan State Waterways Commission. The motion was put into place by Commissioner Mary Rising and seconded by Commissioner Pete Beauregard. Motion carried unanimously, 6-0.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

FACILITIES

The Facilities Subcommittee update consisted of a discussion regarding FY21 Capital Outlay funding plans. Jordan Byelich presented the list of 18 projects for design, construction, or a combination of both. A few of those include Bolles harbor boating access site (BAS), Clinton River Cutoff BAS, Grawn Field Office, Klinger Lake BAS, and the Mackinac Island State Harbor.



OPERATIONS

The Operations Subcommittee received a variance request from the Charlevoix City Marina. The request consisted of a permanent increase from 2 to 3 commercial docks. The Commission supports this request for a 3-year period.

GENERAL UPDATES

Ron Olson reminded the Commission of the ongoing Executive Orders that are in place – this includes the spending and hiring controls and outdoor crowd size of 100 or less. The DNR is still working through projects that were delayed due to COVID-19. Harbors across the state are still experiencing high water levels – some running with reduced amenities, such as Mackinac Island State Harbor, operating without power and Hammond Bay State Harbor only operating as a Harbor of Refuge. Regarding the budget for FY21, the general fund is looking to have a better outcome than anticipated. FY22 budget forecast is in the beginning stages. There has been an uptick in boating access site use, and boat sales are up. In general, boating has been very popular this season.

Vicki McGhee provided a summary of information gathered from the DNR's Law Enforcement Division on boating accidents. There was a curiosity if there was a correlation between boating accidents and the record-level high waters. According to the data collected (as of August 11, 2020), high water does not appear to be a significant factor when compared to the 2 previous years.

GUEST SPEAKER

Rich Hill, Gaylord District Supervisor, provided an update on the Gaylord District's responsibilities and conditions. To summarize, the Gaylord District is responsible for managing 15 state parks and recreation areas, 100 boating access sites, 3 state harbors, 1 waterfall, 31 state forest campgrounds, 1,226 ORV/snowmobile trail miles, 506 pathway miles, and 214 rail trail miles.

On the harbor side of things, Hammond Bay is closed due to high water and submerged electrical connectors, the Harbor Host Pilot Program began at Presque Isle and Straits State Harbor this season. Feedback was positive, as the hosts did a wonderful job. Straits State Harbor had similar occupancy rates in July compared to 2019, but with significantly lower fuel sales. The new fuel system at Presque Isle is working well and reported occupancy and fuel sales are consistent with a normal year.

As for the boating access sites, courtesy skid pier installation at some sites was delayed due to compliance with Executive Orders related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some major maintenance projects needed to be postponed to focus on the basics. Emphasis was placed on safe and functional to get the sites useable for the intended purpose. As more staff was hired, we were able to put more emphasis on aesthetics. There was significant use at all boating access sites.



Increased use of sites by “non-boaters” in some locations. Several locations were impacted by high water this season.

FINANCIAL UPDATES

Financial information updates were provided to the Commissioners in the meeting packet. Michael Desnoyer provided further details regarding gas tax revenue – July 2020 sits at \$12.5 million versus \$14.2 million from July 2019. For July 2020, marine fuel sales are down, and a 5% reduction in boat registrations contributed to overall decreases compared to July 2019.

OPERATIONS UPDATES

Seasonal and transient rates for the 2021 season were provided to the Commissioners in the meeting packet. Although the marinas can change the rate category, the established base rate will not increase from the 2020 season.

Despite a late start to the 2020 season due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an increase in year-to-date harbor net nights reserved, as well as year-to-date harbor reservations.

Some state harbor facility operational challenges were highlighted as well – late opening date, delayed construction repairs, staffing shortages, and a spending freeze. Lime Island is closed to day-use visitors and campers for the duration of 2020, as all docks are submerged. Significant damage has occurred at Port Austin State Harbor due to high-water levels. Electric, water and sewage lines have all been reported as being under water at many harbors. Traffic has been very light from our Canadian boater friends due to border closures.

PROJECT REPORT

The Michigan State Waterways Development Program Project Report was included in each commissioner’s meeting packet for their information. Many projects will have a delayed finish, as the COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant delays.

Paul Petersen briefed the Commission on Grant-In-Aid priority projects and emergency repair requests. Grant agreements have been actively communicated with the requesting communities.

GREAT LAKES WATER LEVEL REPORT

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Detroit District Great Lakes water level outlook was included in each commissioner’s meeting packet for their information.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 12:07 p.m.

The next Michigan State Waterways Commission Meeting: October 2, 2020