

MINUTES

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

March 10, 2016
Doubletree Hotel
650 East 24th Street, Holland, MI 49423

Present for the Natural Resources Commission

John Matonich, chair
J.R. Richardson, vice chair
Vicki Pontz
Rex Schlaybaugh
Tim Nichols

Present for DNR staff

Bill Moritz, DNR director
Bob Reichel, legal counsel, Office of the Attorney General
Dennis Knapp, DNR chief of staff
Cheryl Nelson, executive assistant to the NRC

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chairman John Matonich called the Committee of the Whole meeting to order at 3:08 p.m.

Matonich shared information on a recent Distinguished Service Award received by **Director Moritz** from Michigan State University's College of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

Parks and Trails Update Parks and Recreation division chief **Ron Olson** spoke about the improvements taking place at Ottawa Beach road at Holland state park which include improving the traffic circulation and parking. **Olson** noted that lodging reservations are up 13% since November 1; harbor reservations are up 7.9% and that Recreation Passports sales were also up 1%. He did note that snowmobiling permits were down 4%, and ORV license sales were down 9%. On a good note, trail passes are up 18.7%. Concerning waterways; bids for East Tawas harbor have been submitted, this will be for updating the infrastructure at the harbor. There was an electrical emergency at Muskegon state park; the electrical system on the middle section of the campground didn't meet code, funding has been realigned and work will be done by July 1. On March 29, the department will be going before the Detroit City Council for the annual update on Belle Isle. **Olson** noted two awards that were recently received by the Parks and Recreation division, which included: the Outdoor Adventure Center received the M-Parks Design Excellence Award and the Michigan Association of Planners Award in partnership with DTMB for planning excellence for public outreach.

Acting chief of the Forest Resources division (FRD) **Deb Begalle** joined **Olson** and told the commission about increasing equestrian opportunities in the Pigeon River Country State Forest. They are adding 5.6 miles of trail which will provide for more options for horseback riders. There are currently 115 miles state forest roads and 160 miles of county roads open.

Forest Resources Update **Begalle** provided information on the employee in-service meeting held last month noting that outstanding employees were recognized. There were many training sessions provided. She shared that the division's incident management expertise has been tapped in responding to the Flint water crisis. **Begalle** also spoke on the objectives for upcoming prescribed burns and added that they plan to conduct more prescribed burns than in 2015. Next, she presented a PowerPoint which highlighted the success story on the use of interlocking composite mats which float and work together enabling foresters to gain access to lowland areas with no environmental damage to access timber. **Begalle** presented a video which highlights the division's marketing and outreach efforts with forestry facts that has aired on 98.5 WUPS from Houghton Lake. **Commissioner Pontz** requested a copy of that video to share in her leadership program.

GÜD Marketing Update Marketing and Outreach division chief **Kristin Phillips** introduced **Chelsea Maupin**, research manager of GÜD Marketing. **Director Moritz** shared some information on the awards that have been received by GÜD. **Maupin** spoke about the upcoming campaign that they are managing for the Michigan Wildlife Council by sharing the benefits of hunting and fishing throughout the state to the non-hunting community. The message that they are going to be pushing is that wildlife should be managed for the use and enjoyment of future generations. The campaign will launch statewide on April 11, with the greater focus being in west and southeast Michigan. The theme is "Here for Generations." They will be coordinating with Pure Michigan.

Phillips added that the next Wildlife Council meeting is on Monday, March 14 at the Diagnostic Center in Lansing.

Invasive Carp Update Senior Water Policy advisor **Tammy Newcomb** came before the commission to report on the status of invasive carp. She added that there is currently no evidence of live invasive (bighead, silver and black) carp in the Great Lakes. **Newcomb** shared what is currently happening and what will be happening in the future. She talked about solutions including a commitment to implementing measures, and understanding what urgency responses will be, she also talked about the possibility of closing Brandon Road Lock and Dam. **Newcomb** did add that Illinois is doing a very good job in reducing the risk at Brandon Road. The Chicago Area Waterways System Advisory Committee sent a consensus letter to **President Obama** which stated that there is a need for additional funding for additional studies for solutions. **Governor Snyder** sent follow-up letter to **Obama** and to **Jo-Ellen Darcy**, Assistant Secretary of the Army, regarding near-term implementation solutions. Long-term, committee members just returned from a fourth trip to Washington D.C. The message was to reaffirm the urgency at Brandon Road and they discussed the need for Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Funding. They affirmed that the long-term solution is possible to provide assistance to states not surrounding the Great Lakes who are having problems with Asian carp.

Legislative Report **Trevor VanDyke**, Legislative and Legal Affairs Office director, provided a written report of legislation related to the department. In addition to the written report, **Dennis Knapp** provided updates on recent legislative highlights. **Moritz** added that the recommended budget bill has been presented to the house and senate.

Committee Reports

NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries Commissioner **Rex Schlaybaugh** provided an overview on the committee meeting which included an update from Fisheries chief **Jim Dexter**, where he told the commission about \$350,000 in grants awarded by the department for dam projects. A progress report was received from **Jay Wesley** on the Lake Michigan Management Plan. Wildlife division chief **Russ Mason** told the commission that the division is working to communicate to hunters the rules regarding the transport of animals from chronic wasting disease (CWD)-infested states. They received an update on Michigan's CWD cases and the department's plans; reports on the elk season; the possible expansion of the coyote season and the types of weaponry that may be used during that season. Also received was a report on proposed changes to bear harvest allocations. Lastly, they received a report on the need to establish a feral swine research area.

PUBLIC APPEARANCES BEFORE THE NRC

(**Dennis Knapp** read the official timekeeping procedures and guidelines for the meeting's public appearances which began at 4:04 p.m.)

Dale Hendershot, Michigan Trapper and Predator Callers Association (MTA) informed the commission that the association will hold the MTA convention this summer in Kalamazoo and invited them to attend. He also noted that the association is in support of centerfire rifle use at night. The organization voted to support Michigan Bowhunters on their issue of using a mechanized rifle that shoots arrows out of it using air pressure. They recommend that these new items not be used in the regular archery season. They also support coyote regulations put forth by the department and of using the #3 & 4 buckshot.

Tom Matych came before the commission to talk about Asian carp and provided informational handouts. **Matych** would like to work with the department on this issue. He also discussed restoring native fish.

Jill Fritz, Humane Society of the United States, urged the commission to object to Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment #4. She added that she feels killing more coyotes would be counter-productive. She believes that killing more coyotes would not address concerns regarding local coyote populations and that it is only a temporary fix; when individuals are removed, immigrants will take their place. **Fritz** asked that the commission reject Amendment #4 and recommended that the department develop a non-lethal plan to effectively deal with urban and suburban coyotes where the emphasis is placed on altering human behaviors to prevent habituating coyotes to humans.

Paul Rebori, a retired Conservation Officer, spent his career protecting the natural resources. He spoke on coyote hunting with centerfire rifles at night, of ethics and of clean takes. **Rebori** does not think rimfire is capable of a clean take. His recommendation is for nighttime hunting with certain centerfire rifles-22 caliber, with maximum bullet diameter of .224 inches, with a maximum empty cartridge length of 2.00 inches, this would eliminate high powered rifles. This would help ensure a clean and humane take. He thinks all other regulations should stay in place.

Dave Van't Hof expressed his support for the use of centerfire rifles at night for coyote hunting.

Bob Abbott spoke to the commission regarding centerfire rifles at night. The major concern when he first spoke with the Law Enforcement division was safety. He asked the commission to approve centerfire rifle use at night and provided the commission with a petition with over 1100 signatures in support.

Fred Gadsby would like the commission to review the process and approve the use of centerfire rifles at night.

Tracy Lynn opposes the expansion of the coyote season. She believes there is little scientific justification for expanding the season and thinks it placates certain hunters that want to take more coyotes. She stated that the commission has a duty to use science, community education and ethics in their decisions to manage predators. She feels that the commission doesn't take in other viewpoints, such as the non-hunting community, who, she said provide over 90% of funding for wildlife conservation and management. She would like to see the commission include people who don't hunt. **Matonich** asked that she forward him the article she referred to during her talk regarding the funding of wildlife conservation and management.

Dan Kimmel, Michigan B.A.S.S. Nation, came before the commission to talk about the Michigan Fishing Tournament Information System; over 1000 bass tournaments have already been entered, although this is not all of the tournaments. He also stated that there are tournaments that have not been entered from the UP. He thanked chief **Dexter, Nick Popoff** and **Tom Goniea** for attending their Superbowl of fishing. **Kimmel** added that Michigan lags behind Oklahoma in bass tournaments, but are ahead of most northern states.

Drew YoungeDyke from MUCC stated that they support Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment #4 and the use of #3 & 4 buckshot. He talked about the predator-prey studies that have taken place in the UP, noting that predators cumulatively have the largest impact on the deer in those areas. He shared a story about a family pet that was killed in Shelby Township, indicating that it's not just a UP problem. Regarding elk, **YoungeDyke** thanked **Chad Stewart** for explaining some of the differences from the 2014 survey numbers.

Dan Villwock, representing the Citizens Waterfowl Advisory Council, met January 9 to discuss season bag limits. From hunters' perspective, knowing season dates in advance allows them to plan for time off to hunt. Overall, they are pleased with opportunities the waterfowl hunters have. They fully support the season dates and bag limits presented.

Lincoln Rohn from Michigan Deer Hunters shared invitations with the commission for some upcoming events including the Let 'em Go, Let 'em Grow Whitetail Summit on April 16. His group started to gain support for antler point restrictions (APRs), now they have 7,000+ members. They are about habitat improvements, overall conservation for the whitetail deer and they believe that APRs will bring deer hunting to the next level. The group also supports expanded coyote hunting. **Rohn** added that the Baldwin area bear permits need to be increased.

Ken Yonker spoke to the commission regarding feral hogs; the website states that the department is in partnership with the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and that they provide

some trapping mechanisms for catching them. The Michigan website says to use a single trap and the FWS website says only to use a multi-trap. Coordination is needed. He believes that cast nets are needed to catch Asian carp. **Yonker** spoke of the difficulty regarding locating a parcel on the website with a parcel code. **Steve Sutton** will follow up on the last issue.

Mark Wynia thanked all involved on petitions for the purpose of increasing coyote hunting opportunities. He thanked **Adam Bump** for the work he has done on Amendment #4. **Wynia** thinks there is quite a bit of concern for the need to use centerfire rifle, and does not think that a 22 rimfire is powerful enough to take coyotes at night. He spoke of a scanlight, a red light that can pick up an animal at 200-300 yards at night. **Wynia** also said that the department should focus on science regarding the coyote regulations.

Chairman Matonich adjourned the public appearances portion of the meeting at 4:53 p.m. and called to order the regular meeting of the NRC at 4:54 p.m. He 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

Matonich reviewed the items up for information only, the Fisheries Order 245.16 will have slight modification when it comes back for action. **Matonich** asked **Mason** to verify with neighboring states on with the use of centerfire rifles, if allowable, which calibers, etc.

Approval of Minutes, February 11, 2016 Natural Resources Commission Meeting

Commissioner Nichols made a motion that the minutes of the February 11, 2016 NRC meeting be approved. **Commissioner Pontz** supported the motion. **Matonich** called for discussion, there being none, a vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

FOR INFORMATION ONLY – DIRECTOR

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

DIRECTOR’S ACTION ITEMS

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

COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Commissioner Pontz went to Escanaba last week for the UP Bear Houndsmen meeting. She also attended **Matonich’s** retirement party and was impressed with the engagement that the chairman has in his community and the areas that he has provided leadership.

Commissioner Schlaybaugh spent the last thirty days evaluating the intercoastal fishing in Florida.

Commissioner Richardson attended a UP Habitat Workgroup meeting that had a great turnout. He also attended a Whitetails of Marquette meeting.

Commissioner Nichols thanked the public for coming out and sharing their views and concerns with the commission. He also thanked **Mason** for coming to Jackson College, and appreciates his involvement. In addition, **Nichols** thanked Michigan Trappers and Predator Callers Association for sponsoring the morning's Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus breakfast. He added that the retirement party for **Matonich** was a very nice event.

Director Moritz shared that the sportsmen's caucus was well attended and looks forward to the work the Wildlife Council will be doing.

Chairman Matonich attended a meeting at MSU's Quantitative Fish Center, which was a partnership between Lake Gogebic Improvement Association, Chamber of Commerce and Fisheries division to develop a long-term management plan for Lake Gogebic. He attended the UP Wildlife Habitat Workgroup meeting with **Commissioner Richardson** and commended **Richardson** for his work with this group; it shows great partnerships between landowners and the state. He attended the joint meeting of the West UP Citizen's Advisory Council and the East UP Citizen's Advisory Council and noted that it was extremely informative.

Next Meeting

Chairman Matonich announced that the next meeting of the NRC is scheduled for Thursday, April 14, 2016 at the MSU Diagnostic Center, 4125 Beaumont Road in Lansing. Committees meeting in April will be the NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries, Michigan State Parks Advisory Council, and the NRC Marketing, Partnership, Youth and Outreach Advisory Committee.

Adjournment

Commissioner Nichols made a motion to adjourn. **Commissioner Pontz** seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 5:05 p.m.

APPROVED: Date: 4/14/16



John Matonich, NRC Chairman



William E. Moritz, Ph.D., DNR Director