

## MINUTES

### NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION MEETING

November 10, 2016  
MSU Diagnostic Center  
4125 Beaumont Road, Lansing, MI 48910

#### Present for the Natural Resources Commission

John Matonich, chair  
J.R. Richardson, vice-chair  
Vicki Pontz  
Christine Crumbaugh  
Louise Klarr  
Tim Nichols

#### Present for DNR staff

Keith Creagh, DNR director  
Peter Manning, legal counsel, Office of the Attorney General  
Dennis Knapp, DNR chief of staff  
Stacy Welling Haughey, DNR Upper Peninsula Regional Coordinator  
Cheryl Nelson, executive assistant to the NRC

### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

**Chairman John Matonich** called the Committee of the Whole meeting to order at 2:30 p.m.

**Parks and Trails Update Jacklyn Blodgett**, Parks and Recreation division, provided updates on the 2016 year-end numbers; the recreation passport was up 31.9 percent. Camping reservations are up 20 percent from last year at the same time; 89.2 percent of reservations are now done online. Algonac State Park site number 22 brought in over \$6,000 as the number one revenue maker this season; the average site brings in \$2,000 per season. Belle Isle attendance is up 14 percent, ORV licenses are up three percent and trail passes are up 7.5 percent. Currently, snowmobile permits are down eight percent from last year. The first ORV advisory and snowmobile workgroup meeting will be held December 14. The proposed plan for the designation of water trails is being reviewed; it has been reviewed and supported by the Waterways commission and the Michigan State Parks Advisory committee. This will establish policy for the water trails program.

**Fisheries Habitat Improvement Grants Randy Claramunt**, Lake Huron basin coordinator from the Fisheries division talked about the three habitat improvement grants projects for 2017; Buhl Dam Removal in Alcona county, equipment replacement for Muskegon walleye pond improvement and the last grant is to collect information to prioritize future habitat projects on the Au Sable and Manistee rivers.

**Lake Superior and Lake Huron Salmon and Trout Update Claramunt** reported that in Lake Superior nearly 99 percent of angler caught salmon are wild. Coho are also self-sustaining; therefore the department will discontinue salmon stocking in Lake Superior next year. He also

talked about fishing opportunities in Lake Huron, noting that walleye and lake trout numbers are strong, perch catches are up and bass fishing is exceptional.

**Oil and Gas Lease Auction Updates** Minerals Management director **Mark Sweatman** presented results from the second oil and gas lease auction of the year, which was held on October 18. There were 1400 parcels nominated, of that, 603 leases were generated. Total acreage offered was an estimated 55,800, 11,300 acres were leased. The auction raised \$412,709. The next nomination for auction closes on December 2 for the May 2017 auction. **Matonich** requested a presentation on the nomination process in 2017, which is also to include information on the dollar return.

**Commissioner Pontz** asked for a Graymont update; **Sweatman** noted that they are in the first phase doing limited work, some materials have been shipped off for trials, some for testing. Graymont progress is on schedule.

**Deer Season Update/Audubon Partnership Position** Wildlife biologist **Chad Stewart** shared that over 435,000 hunting licenses had been purchased as of November 8, which is down 1.9 percent from 2015. **Stewart** said that early numbers from check stations indicate that all three regions are up; the Upper Peninsula at 60 percent, Northern Lower Peninsula at four percent and the Southern Lower Peninsula eight percent. With regard to chronic wasting disease (CWD), 615 deer have been submitted from the core area, plus an additional 200 deer from the CWD management zones. **Matonich** shared that he has been receiving much feedback that hunters are upset about a Tuesday, November 15 opener for firearm deer season and would like a Saturday opener. He asked **Stewart** for more current information on which choice is preferable to the public. **Matonich** asked that a question regarding their preference for the opening day/date should be included in the next survey. **Stewart** responded in agreement.

Wildlife division chief **Russ Mason** talked about the partnership position between the department and the Audubon Society. **Caleb Putnam** has been chosen for this jointly-funded position which will establish a new conservation outreach program in the state with a special emphasis on birds.

**Legislative Report** **Trevor VanDyke**, Legislative and Legal Affairs Office director, provided a written report of legislation related to the department.

### **Committee Reports**

#### **NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries**

**Commissioner J.R. Richardson** shared that the committee received updates from both Wildlife and Fisheries divisions. **Deputy Director Moritz** made a presentation on the commission's request for a centerfire firearm regulation, which included regulations from surrounding states. **Claramunt** provided numbers from the 2016 wild salmon egg take in Little Manistee river, Swan Creek Weir and Platte River Weir, and added that the department's goal was met. **Chief Mason** talked about reviewing the CWD plan to explore the potential of modification to address Upper Peninsula concerns. **Adam Bump** provided the commissioners with a running list of the issues and noted that the issues selected for 2018 are related to bobcat and fisher/marten seasons. **Chad Stewart** provided information on the updated deer management plan and **Dr. Brent Rudolph** talked about deer hunter retention research.

**PUBLIC APPEARANCES BEFORE THE NRC**

(**Stacy Welling-Haughey** read the official timekeeping procedures and guidelines for the meeting's public appearances, which began at 2:58 p.m.)

**Amy Trotter**, deputy director of MUCC talked about the spring turkey season start date in Unit ZZ; MUCC supports a Saturday opener, the Saturday closest to April 20 that would extend the season to 16 days. They also support the reduction of licenses to this unit as recommended in the Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment. **Trotter** discussed the centerfire at night issue, noting that it is supported by MUCC; however, their resolution had no restrictions. The group would like to see the caliber requirement raised to include .243 and the requirement for optics removed.

**Dale Hendershot**, Michigan Trapper and Predator Callers Association (MTPCA) spoke about centerfire at night and stated that this type of hunting should be unrestricted. **Hendershot** noted that in speaking with other states, it was indicated that they have no issues, including with poaching or safety. The MTPCA suggested allowing up to 6.5mm caliber ammunition.

**Merle Jones** representing Michigan Predator Hunters for Centerfire at Night stated that they believe restrictions in Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 11 of 2016 are unwarranted. **Jones** stated that hunter responsibility is improved through education not by regulation. **Jones** asked that the commission use science-based information to make their decision.

**Paul Cianciolo and Rob Schultz** from Michigan Predator Hunters for Centerfire at Night presented photos to the commission on the ability to see animals with various night visions. **Cianciolo** spoke on the advantages behind the lights and thermal devices and of getting more people into the sport. They would like to be able to use the caliber the hunter already has and be able to spend a minimal amount to get into the sport. **Schultz** added that they want a humane, ethical harvest and need the knock-down power to do so.

**Ted Whalen** supports centerfire at night, but not as written in Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 11 of 2016. He stated that allowing centerfire at night is just an equipment upgrade and that there is a need to use equipment that has enough knock-down power. He stated that the order prohibits lights and this is a step backwards. **Mr. Whalen** gave the commissioners a brief explanation of various ammunition calibers. He added that hunting should be with a cartridge that is safe for hearing. He would like more equipment options allowed than what are in the proposed order.

**John Caretti** stated that he was happy with the furbearer regulation changes this year. **Caretti** said that he had visited the shooting range at Ortonville and that it is a great facility. He shared his concerns regarding centerfire firearms at night regulations; he does not care for the caliber restrictions and does not like the night vision requirement.

**Millard Holton** came before the commission to talk about the spring turkey regulations; he would like to see hunting from a platform allowed when hunting turkeys.

**Nick Vanecek** came to speak to the commission about the mentored youth program. He believes it is confusing and that if a child under the age of 10 can complete and pass hunter's education, then they should be allowed to purchase a regular deer tag. **Chairman Matonich** informed **Mr. Vanecek** that the Legislature set the age requirements, not the commission.

**Vanecek** was directed toward various hunting groups, such as MUCC, that he could work with for proposing an amendment to the license package legislation.

**Hugh Marx**, Director of NWTF Michigan Chapter opposed the Saturday turkey hunting opener in April as he wants what is best for the resource. His group is in agreement with the current package of regulations and see no reason to make changes and stated that they are not opposed to liberalizing regulations.

**Erik Schnelle**, President, Michigan Quality Deer Management Association (QDMA) State Chapter was introduced by past president, **Michael Goyne**. **Goyne** will continue working as an advocacy coordinator. **Schnelle** said that he is proud to represent this group that is facing big challenges and opportunities. The group looks forward to continuing the collaboration between QDMA and the commission.

**Dan Kimmel**, Conservation Director Michigan B.A.S.S. Nation stated that his group is troubled that the commission is now acting like a popularity contest sounding board. **Kimmel** said that decisions need to be made by the use of sound science. He said that there is no existing science that they can't have bass tournaments in April and May and that an adaptive management study could be done.

**Chairman Matonich adjourned the public appearances portion of the meeting at 4:03 p.m. and called to order the regular meeting of the NRC at 4:04 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**

#### **FOR INFORMATION ONLY – NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION**

**Matonich** reviewed the items up for information only.

#### **Centerfire Firearms for Nighttime Raccoon, Opossum, Fox and Coyote Hunting, Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 11 of 2016**

**Commissioner Richardson** made a motion to have the department update the order to have ammunition cartridges allowed up to a 6.5mm and to remove the optics restrictions.

**Commissioner Nichols** supported the motion. **Matonich** called for discussion, there being none, a vote was taken and the motion is carried unanimously.

#### **NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION ACTION ITEMS**

**Commissioner Nichols** made a motion that the minutes of the October 13, 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.

#### **Spring Turkey Regulations, Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 10 of 2016**

**Commissioner Klarr** moved that Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 10 of 2016, Spring Turkey Regulations be adopted. **Commissioner Crumbaugh** supported the motion. **Matonich** called for discussion, **Klarr** then motioned for an amendment to legally hunt turkey in

Unit ZZ from an elevated platform. **Commissioner Pontz** asked about having MUCC and the NWTF meet to discuss their recommendations for a Saturday opener and delay this order for one month. There was discussion on the necessity of having this order passed at this time to meet printing deadlines in order to get the digest out on schedule. Upon discussion, it was stated that it is critical to have the order passed and that this order does not address the Wildlife Conservation Order section necessary to make the amendment regarding platforms. **Commissioner Klarr** withdrew her motion. **Commissioner Pontz** made a motion to table the order for a month. There was no support for the motion, therefore the motion died. **Commissioner Crumbaugh** motioned for an amendment to move the opening day to the Saturday closest to April 20. **Commissioner Pontz** supported the motion. **Matonich** called for discussion on the amendment, there being none, **Matonich** called for a vote on the amendment only, **Commissioners Crumbaugh** and **Pontz** voted yes, **Commissioners Nichols, Klarr,** and **Richardson** voted no. The motion to amend failed. **Matonich** asked for the order to be approved as written. **Commissioners Nichols, Klarr, Richardson** and **Crumbaugh** voted to pass the amendment, **Commissioner Pontz** voted no. The amendment passed.

### FOR INFORMATION ONLY – DIRECTOR

**Chairman Matonich** read the items up “for information only” items listed 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 Pontz** attended the UP Sportsmen’s Association meeting last month, where there was good discussion with great ideas. She added that **Stacy Welling Haughey** had great response on both action and response to requests.

**Commissioner Richardson** wished all a safe deer hunting season.

**Commissioner Klarr** attended the ribbon cutting ceremony at Watkins Lake State Park and County Preserve.

**Commissioner Nichols** also wished all a safe firearm opening day. He thanked MUCC and Jackson College for volunteering to construct a hunting blind for hunters with disabilities and completing rabbitat work at Sharonville State Game Area. **Nichols** highlighted that it would be good to attend future sportsmen’s caucus as we will be starting with a new legislature.

**Chairman Matonich** attended the strategic decision-making meeting on November 9 with the turkey group; he added that there was much good discussion and representation.

### Next Meeting

**Chairman Matonich** announced that the next meeting of the NRC is scheduled for Thursday, December 8 at the Lansing Center, 333 E. Michigan Avenue, Lansing. The committees meeting that day will be the Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee, NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries, and the NRC Policy Committee on Finance and Administration.

**Adjournment**

**Commissioner Nichols** made a motion to adjourn. **Commissioner Richardson** seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 4:20 p.m.

APPROVED: Date: 12/8/16

  
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John Malonich, NRC Chairman

  
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Keith Creagh, DNR Director