

MINUTES

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

October 13, 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
Rex Schlaybaugh
Christine Crumbaugh
Louise Klarr
Tim Nichols

Present for DNR staff

Keith Creagh, DNR director
Robert Reichel, legal counsel, Office of the Attorney General
Dennis Knapp, DNR chief of staff
Trevor VanDyke, DNR Legislative and Legal Affairs director
Cheryl Nelson, executive assistant to the NRC

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chairman John Matonich called the Committee of the Whole meeting to order at 2:25 p.m.

Parks and Trails Update **Ron Olson**, Parks and Recreation division chief shared that the Oman Creek boat launch is now back up and operational. For fiscal year 2016, Recreation Passport sales have exceeded 31% participation for all state-registered vehicles. For non-residents, the state was up 3,000 annual passes and 12,000 daily passes. Camping and lodging are up 6.4% and harbor nights are up 10.4%, ORV permits are up 1.7%, trail permits are up 8.5% and snowmobile permits are currently down 4.8%. The Camper Lodging Survey was recently completed with 25,000 respondents and a 91% overall satisfaction rate. The Michigan State Parks Advisory committee, Trail committee, and Waterways commission are planning to meet together in the near future to talk about common ground; water trails in particular. The Sigma Gamma Foundation donated \$300,000 for a fully accessible playground on the east end of Belle Isle; they will be honored on October 20. In addition, there will be a ribbon cutting on October 26 at the new Watkins Lake State Park and County Preserve.

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Update Wildlife biologist **Chad Stewart** provided a report on CWD, which is a slow-moving progressive disease that affects deer, elk and moose and is always fatal. Wildlife division has been researching what has happened with CWD in other states that have been dealing with the disease for a long time. In Wyoming, there is a population decline of 50% and a prevalence rate of 50% in mule deer. In white-tail deer, the prevalence rate is 33%. With this level of CWD, hunting will be unsustainable in Wyoming. In

Wisconsin, CWD was first detected in 2001. The disease was first detected in southern Wisconsin and as of 2014, has spread through to northern Wisconsin, where it has now been detected within 30 miles of the Michigan/Wisconsin border. There is concern because of deer's migratory behavior. Currently Michigan has had eight positive deer out of a total 6,800 that have been tested, five in Ingham county and three in Clinton county. Five of the eight have been brought in by sharpshooters from U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Wildlife Services staff. **Stewart** provided information on the management plan on CWD, which includes maintaining an aggressive approach and continued surveillance. For additional information, **Stewart** directed all to view the website at www.michigan.gov/cwd.

Bovine Tuberculosis Update Wildlife veterinarian **Dan O'Brien** provided an update on the current status of bovine tuberculosis (TB) in the state. He stated that it is mostly prevalent in deer and that in 2015 that rate was 2.7%, the highest since 1998. If this continues two more years it would trigger a USDA review. **O'Brien** shared the history of the TB eradication program in cattle, which began in 1917. As of August of this year, northeast Michigan is the only remaining place in the U.S. not accredited free of TB. USDA had created a split-state status and a memorandum of understanding (MOU) was created for the USDA and states to agree upon framework. Most recently, this MOU was signed in the spring by Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD), Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and the USDA APHIS. If there are more than three newly-infected herds within the zone in a 12-month period, USDA would conduct an evaluation. There are several follow-up actions that USDA could take, including to do nothing, conduct a TB program review or drop the TB accreditation status of either the Modified Accredited Zone or the entire state.

Partnership Among Pheasants Forever, Enbridge and the DNR Wildlife division chief **Russ Mason** and **Bill Vander Zouwen** from Pheasants Forever talked about the new partnership between the department, Pheasants Forever and Enbridge. Enbridge will provide \$500,000 dollars for pheasant restoration and habitat work in Michigan. Pheasants Forever will serve as the banker for this partnership.

Lake Michigan Stocking Lake Michigan basin coordinator **Jay Wesley** and Fisheries division chief **Jim Dexter** talked about balancing predator and prey and shared the Michigan stocking plan. This would include a decrease of 46% Chinook salmon to 300,000, 80,000 lake trout, 550,000 brown trout, 580,000 steelhead, 1.57 million Coho salmon and exchange 50,000 lake trout for steelhead. **Wesley** then shared the department's next steps will include monitoring creel, looking a charter boat data, evaluating prey and predators; if there is a better balance they may consider increasing Chinook salmon again. The public has an interest to harvest more lake trout. A proposal may be brought in 2018 to open the season to all year from Arcadia to New Buffalo.

Dexter added that the Lake Michigan Committee came to an agreement to reach a goal of reduction. All states can use different tactics and species to meet that goal. Anglers wonder why Michigan is cutting this much and another state is not; the lake is managed as a whole and the states work together to achieve goals.

New Zealand Mud Snail Update **Dexter** shared a report on the recent inspection of a private fish hatchery on the Au Sable River. Twenty-one rivers have been surveyed in the state, only the Pere Marquette, Au Sable and Boardman rivers have been found positive for the New Zealand Mud Snail.

State Game Area Blue Ribbon Advisory Group Report Co-chairs **Bill Demmer** and **Dan Eichinger** talked about the role of the state game areas (SGA) to meet the needs and demands of Michigan residents and thanked the members of the group for their participation. The panel suggested several items including allocating certain parts of SGAs for certain activities, allocating pattern of use, having a limited-draw concept similar to the managed waterfowl hunting areas, engaging local units of government in SGAs, and creating a survey specifically designed to reach out to those who hunt public land. The panel added that there is a desire to get more pheasants on the landscape which would reinvigorate that hunting experience; there is an unmet demand for recreational pheasant hunting in Michigan. **Eichinger** added that concerning the department's recruitment, retention and reactivation (R3) efforts, SGAs need to be inviting to the new and novice hunters and using "learning to hunt" models.

The next steps would include getting direction from the commission and the department on how they would like to proceed with the panel's recommendations. **Matonich** asked that chief **Mason** and deputy director **Miller** come back to the commission with an action plan in 2017. **Richardson** asked that panel members come back to the commission in a year or so to rate how the department is doing on acting on the panel's recommendations. **Nichols** suggested that the chair of the Wildlife and Fisheries committee take part in developing the action plan. It was suggested that determining priorities could be discussed at the commission's 2017 planning meeting.

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, **VanDyke** provided updates on recent legislative highlights.

Committee Reports

NRC Policy Committee on Marketing, Partnership, Youth and Outreach

Commissioner Tim Nichols stated that they received presentations on DNR shooting ranges, Michigan history and cultural programs, the Outdoor Adventure Center, Wildlife division education update, the outreach partnership between Marketing and Fisheries divisions, invasive species education and the expansion of the Academy of Natural Resources.

Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee

Commissioner Louise Klarr stated that the committee received presentations on the Flint River Restoration Project that is very aggressive and another on the Bay City State Recreation Area to better access Saginaw Bay. The committee was also given an update on problems with firewood in our state parks how staff will be handling this issue. **Theresa Bryan** from Belle Isle State Park was recognized for her part in saving a guest's life.

NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries

Commissioner Rex Schlaybaugh shared that the committee received updates from both Wildlife and Fisheries divisions. **Chief Dexter** reported on the 2016 salmon run and egg take at various weirs, the Inland Trout Management Plan and the Boardman River Selective Fish Passage Project. **Chief Mason** reported on a new cooperative position with National Audubon Society, reviewed the report on hunter numbers and on the CWD Communications Plan. A report was received from **Drs. Porter** and **Stevens** on Michigan's wild turkeys. **Al Stewart** reported on the 2017-2019 spring turkey regulations and **Chad Stewart** shared the recent elk harvest.

PUBLIC APPEARANCES BEFORE THE NRC

(**Dennis Knapp** read the official timekeeping procedures and guidelines for the meeting's public appearances which began 4:07 p.m.)

Amy Trotter, deputy director of MUCC came before the commission to discuss spring turkey regulations. **Trotter** reminded the commission of the resolution that the MUCC membership signed recommending changing the season's opening day to a Saturday in the ZZ unit. She spoke of having a trial period for a Saturday opener to have a good model. She added that when the license package increase went into effect, 14,000 resident turkey hunters were lost along with 62% of non-resident hunters. **Trotter** looked at data since 2010, only 80% of turkey license buyers actually hunt. She also looked at other species; bear hunters who purchase a license and hunt is 91%, with deer hunters at 92-93%. MUCC thinks this proposal would address giving hunters the extra time where there is availability. **Matonich** asked that she forward information for Unit ZZ. **Trotter** added that 91% of turkey hunting is done on private land.

Millard Holton spoke on spring turkey regulations and stated that he would like to see the opening day moved to a Saturday.

Mike Sabatino from the Michigan Spearfishing Association came before the commission requesting a change in regulations to allow breathhold underwater spearfishing to harvest more species of fish than are currently on the list of allowable fish. He shared that Wisconsin has allowed this type of fishing since 1978 and has had no adverse effect on the fisheries. **Sabatino** stated that the impacts on the resources would be negligible. They would like the commission to see this as another method of fishing in Michigan.

Art Pelon from the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) came before the commission as a private landowner, turkey hunter and as president of Michigan NWTF to speak on the spring turkey regulations. The change to a Saturday opener should be evaluated and supported by the commission before it is implemented. A hunter survey from 2015 indicates 70% hunter satisfaction, rating their hunting experience as good, very good or excellent. **Pelon** added that it is obvious that hunters agree with the current regulations. The NWTF supports the recommended season, license quotas and strongly supports the Monday opener.

Pete Demos, regional representative from NWTF and MUCC also voiced his comments on the spring turkey regulations and indicated that he is against a Saturday opening for the spring hunting season as he believes that the increased concentration of hunters in the woods would jeopardize the safety of hunters.

Leo Geller from the Maple River Deer Co-op shared his comments regarding the spring turkey regulations. He supports a Monday opener. If there is a need to change this regulation to a Saturday opener, it should fit into the three-year regulatory program. The process needs the opportunity to be vetted by the department and others. **Geller** added that if it's a good idea today, it will be a good idea at the end of the process. He also added that the collaboration between the department and the Audubon Society is great.

Hugh Marx representing the Michigan NWTF does not support changing the opening day of the spring turkey season to a Saturday. He stated that he thinks the conservation of the turkeys should be first and foremost.

Dennis Eade from Michigan Steelheaders spoke on the reduction in Lake Michigan stocking of Chinook salmon. They have educated their members on the science behind the decision to reduce stocking. Fifty-eight percent of members are in support of the decision.

Dan O'Keefe from Michigan Sea Grant and MSU Extension also came to talk about salmon stocking. Chinook are the most important species for big lake fishing. He stated that we now have great information on the impact of wild fish. In 2014 and 2015, 71% of Chinook caught in Michigan were wild, only 7% were stocked. **O'Keefe** added that a reduction would not make that much of a difference. There is a legacy of a great stocking program in Michigan and we need to educate people that the system has changed and we need to adapt with it.

Jim Strader is an avid turkey hunter who has four children who all love to turkey hunt. He would like to see the Monday opener stay.

Dale Hendershot, Michigan Trapper and Predator Callers Association introduced **Trevor Daley** as the new executive vice president of the association. **Hendershot** mentioned the hunter education program for Conservation Officers and stated that they do a tremendous job and that the staff teaching the program is top-notch. He added that the new recruits have an extremely good attitude.

Chairman Matonich adjourned the public appearances portion of the meeting at 4:58 p.m. and called to order the regular meeting of the NRC at 4:59 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.

Spring Turkey Regulations, Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment no. 10 of 2016

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION ACTION ITEMS

Commissioner Klarr made a motion that the minutes of the September 8, 2016 NRC meeting be approved. **Commissioner Crumbaugh** supported the motion. **Matonich** called for discussion, there being none, a vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

Special Fishing Regulations, Big Island Lakes Complex, Schoolcraft County, Fisheries Order No. 201.16

Commissioner Schlaybaugh moved that Fisheries Order 201.16, Special Fishing Regulations, Big Island Lakes Complex, Schoolcraft County be adopted. **Commissioner Klarr** supported the motion. **Matonich** called for discussion, there being none, a vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

Minnow, Wiggler, and Crayfish Regulations for Commercial Purposes and Waters that are Closed to the Personal Take of Minnows, Fisheries Order No. 216.16

Commissioner Schlaybaugh moved that Fisheries Order 216.16, Minnow, Wiggler, and Crayfish Regulations for Commercial Purposes and Waters that are Closed to the Personal Take of Minnows be adopted. **Commissioner Crumbaugh** supported the motion. **Matonich** called for discussion, there being none, a vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

Bow, Spear, and Crossbow Fishing Regulations, Fisheries Order No. 219.16

Commissioner Schlaybaugh moved that Fisheries Order 219.16, Bow, Spear and Crossbow Fishing Regulations be adopted. **Commissioner Klarr** supported the motion. **Matonich** called for discussion, there being none, a vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

Regulations for the Take of Reptiles and Amphibians, Fisheries Order No. 224.16

Commissioner Schlaybaugh moved that Fisheries Order 224.16, Regulations for the Take of Reptiles and Amphibians be adopted. **Commissioner Nichols** supported the motion. **Matonich** called for discussion, there being none, a vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

Technical Amendment Use of Suppressors in the Taking of Game, Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 9 of 2016

Commissioner Schlaybaugh moved that Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 9 of 2016, Technical Amendment Use of Suppressors in the Taking of Game, be adopted. **Commissioner Crumbaugh** supported the motion. **Matonich** called for discussion, there being none, a vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

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's leadership class went into the wilderness experience, and upon arriving sighted a bear and cubs. She thanked the department for the good PowerPoint on bears.

Commissioner Schlaybaugh attended the Al Litzenburger Ruffed Grouse Society board of directors meeting where he talked about the functions of the commission.

Commissioner Klarr toured Hennepin Marsh on the Illinois River where she viewed some conservation work. She encouraged reading the article in National Geographic on the National parks and recruitment, retention, and reactivation.

Commissioner Nichols participated in a recent charity shoot and praised parents for getting their kids out.

Chairman Matonich shared that he has been getting positive feedback for holding the September commission meeting in Ironwood. Going to rural parts of the state is appreciated.

Next Meeting

Chairman Matonich announced that the next meeting of the NRC is scheduled for Thursday, November 10 at the MSU Diagnostic Center, 4125 Beaumont Road, Lansing. The committee meeting that day will be the NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries.

Adjournment

Commissioner Richardson made a motion to adjourn. **Commissioner Klarr** seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 5:06 p.m.

APPROVED: Date: 11/10/16



John Matonich, NRC Chairman



Keith Creagh, DNR Director