

MINUTES

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

September 8, 2016
Gogebic Community College
David Lindquist Student and Conference Center
E 4946 Jackson Road, Ironwood, MI 49938

Present for the Natural Resources Commission

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

Present for DNR staff

Keith Creagh, DNR director
Hal Martin, legal counsel, Office of the Attorney General
Dennis Knapp, DNR chief of staff
Stacy Welling-Haughey, UP 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 2:04 p.m.

Matonich thanked Gogebic Community College President **Jim Lorensen** for sponsoring the Natural Resources Commission meeting and various events.

Commissioner Louise Klarr introduced a short video clip featuring **Paul Zarzyski's** poem about words growing wild in the woods.

Parks and Trail Update Ron Yesney, Upper Peninsula (UP) trail coordinator, representing the Parks and Recreation division (PRD) provided an update on the trail system in the UP, which was restructured in 2015 to more of a regional system to be more efficient. He also talked about the statewide rail-trail which was purchased in 1982 and the next planned steps for the division/department. **Daryl Welch** and **Roger Storm** from the real estate section along with the Attorney General **Hal Martin** were thanked for their assistance with the program. **Yesney** provided information on both motorized and non-motorized trails and talked about the partnership with the Michigan National Guard's 1432nd engineering company. He stressed the need for additional partners.

Doug Rich, western UP district supervisor, provided an update on area parks and boating in the UP; he noted that camping attendance was great, up 7-10%. He discussed several infrastructure projects that are ongoing. On the waterways side, Parks had some great projects completed including a boating access site in Silver City, the Bergland dock, and Johnson Lake

boating access. **Rich** stated that several of the challenges the division faces include park infrastructure issues in Baraga, Van Riper, and Porcupine Mountains Wilderness state parks. He mentioned the recent storm damage and noted that the division is making headway and that the cleanup effort was multi-divisional and included multiple departments. **Rich** shared that they are having trouble getting seasonal workers in the state parks and that he will be working with colleges and Tribal agencies next year to fill positions. He talked about several partnerships including Friends of Van Riper playground work, Northern Michigan University and Michigan Tech on invasives control, Fort Wilkins Natural History Association which is funding the cultural resource at Fort Wilkins. **Rich** highlighted special events noting the local support.

Upper Peninsula Storm Damage Update **Doug Rich** and UP Coordinator **Stacy Haughey** provided information on the on-the-ground work that has been done and that still continues with the July storm cleanup. **Haughey** stated that the cleanup has been a team approach, utilizing Parks, Law Enforcement, Wildlife and Forest Resources (FRD) divisions. She noted that **Rich** has only been in his role four months, and has been a great leader with this emergency response. **Rich** detailed some of the work that has been completed. Michigan Department of Corrections provided service free of charge getting Porcupine Mountains safe for the public again. He thanked FRD's sawyer crew, which was phenomenal. **Rich** also added that no one was injured in either storm or the cleanup. **Director Creagh** thanked **Doug** and his staff who were great on incident command. He also thanked all that have been trained in emergency response within the DNR, who were also a huge help for the Department of Environmental Quality recently.

Forestry Update Forest Resources division chief **Bill O'Neill** along with Ottawa National Forest's forest supervisor **Linda Jackson** provided information on what is happening forestry-wise in the west UP. **O'Neill** spoke on the Good Neighbor Authority which is working cooperatively with the Forest Service on timber sales and added that the department has similar agreements with all three national forests. He talked about the forest products industry noting that **Governor Snyder** announced that the forest products industry has reached the Timber Advisory Council's goal of being a \$20 billion industry in Michigan two years ahead of schedule and that the industry supports 90,000 jobs. **Jackson** talked about the Ottawa National Forest timber program, Black River harbor and road access projects. Their timber program has gone up over 60% in volume in the last five years. They have been putting dollars in the Black River harbor project, where there has not been drinkable water and docks were rotting. **Jackson** also talked about the local storm damage where the largest amount of damage was at Black River harbor. Two years ago they had open houses on road access that went well. They currently have over 300 road systems on the forest that need improvement for access.

Aquila/Manistique Dam **Scott Goeman**, real estate section manager talked about a couple of major real estate issues in the UP including the purchase of 44.6 acres for the Manistique Lamprey Barrier. This acquisition will support development of a sea lamprey barrier in partnership with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission. Fisheries division chief **Jim Dexter** added that the lamprey barrier will be a more effective control of lamprey than the existing dam and chemical lampricide treatment approach.

Next, **Goeman** talked about the Aquila Resources land exchange application as part of a Back Forty's mining operation in Menominee County; the application includes 290 acres of desired state-owned land in exchange for 755 acres of privately-owned land. The proposed mine is

regulated by the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and a draft mining permit has been issued. The mine permit is not dependent on the land exchange. The land transaction application is under review by the department to compare the values of the natural and cultural resources and potential for public outdoor recreation. He noted that public comments may be made by accessing the department's website.

UP Habitat Workgroup **Steve Carson**, Wildlife division biologist, talked about deer winter range planning. The workgroup was originally a commission workgroup that was reformed in 2014 to focus on deer wintering complexes. It is a partnership between the department and Safari Club International. **Carson** spoke on the importance of deer winter range in the UP adding that food and shelter are influenced primarily by forest management activities and that 60% of the winter range is in private ownership. The group provides information to private owners on improving their property for winter ranges. The deliverables of the workgroup are to have a detailed individual deer wintering complex management plan and outreach to let landowners know of the plan availability.

Governor's Upper Peninsula Tour **Director Keith Creagh** talked about **Governor Snyder's** recent trip to the UP. While in Marquette, they stopped at the celebration for the Trust Fund opening of the Clark Lambros Beach Park, did some fishing on Lake Superior and also kayaked the Pictured Rocks. In Delta County, they went to Bessie Timber Products where it was announced that the Timber Advisory Council's goals had been met. They also attended the UP State Fair luncheon, and traveled to Escanaba and Lake Superior locations to look at infrastructure needs; both urban and rural. **Creagh** thanked DNR staff for their involvement.

Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park and Keweenaw Bay Education Update **Bob Wild** from the Marketing and Outreach division shared highlights of the park and its interpretive programs. **Wild** shared that annual visitation numbers are over 300,000 and that their educational programs reach over 5,000 students. This visitor center is jointly run by Parks and Recreation and Marketing and Outreach divisions. The Academy of Natural Resources-North version for natural resources education was held in the UP at the Ford Forestry Center in partnership with Michigan Technological University. He talked about partnerships with the National Wild Turkey Federation and the Learn to Hunt Wild Turkey Program for recruitment and retention efforts. **Wild** also provided information on their invasive species educational efforts. They also have an introductory archery program in the park; Arrow's Away. Last year they taught over 17,000 students how to shoot bow and arrows.

Lastly, **Wild** talked about school groups, in 2016 there were 16 groups. The biggest obstacle for schools is funding. Through partnerships, groups can apply for mini-grants to have field experience at Porcupine Mountains Wilderness state park.

West UP Citizen's Advisory Council Update Council members **Phil Wirtanen** and **Jim Lorenson** provided an overview on the purpose of the group stating that it allows them to have the ability to share the citizens' perspectives with the department. **Lorenson** thanked the commission for coming the western UP and sharing their perspectives and ideas with the citizens of the area. **Dick Pershinske**, representing the Eastern UP Citizen's Advisory Council provided an update on what they've been accomplishing in the eastern UP. They are putting together a new subcommittee; Information, Outreach and Communication; using some of the Wildlife Council data to perform the same objectives. **Commissioner**

Richardson thanked **Pershinske, Lorenson** and **Wirtanen** and all members of the councils for volunteering their time and input; it adds to the ability to communicate and be transparent.

Lorenson commented that he has recognized and experienced that the commission and department level, and staff at all levels are dedicated individuals who put the resources at the top, using science-based information and logic in often difficult and controversial times.

Commissioner Pontz added that the use of volunteers within the department has increased amazingly and it's brilliant on many fronts; cost-saving and the citizen-engagement in the natural resources is working extremely well in the UP.

Committee Reports

NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries

Commissioner Rex Schlaybaugh shared that the committee received updates from both Wildlife and Fisheries divisions. **Chief Dexter** provided an update on the Lake Michigan Chinook salmon agreement to reduce stocking, also information on the Lake Gogebic walleye experimental regulation. **Dexter** also updated the committee on the Yellowstone river parasite problem that closed 200 miles of river. He added that it is important to be on high alert regarding invasive species particularly in cold water fisheries. **Dexter** provided information on the four fish orders up for information and there was a presentation on the 10-brook trout bag limit. **Chief Mason** provided the elk season results along with an update on chronic wasting disease and epizootic hemorrhagic disease in deer in the state. **Mason** thanked the National Wild Turkey Federation for their contribution to the Glassen Education Building at the Rose Lake shooting range. He also gave a presentation on the predator-prey study and reviewed the technical changes to orders up for action next month.

PUBLIC APPEARANCES BEFORE THE NRC

(**Stacy Welling Haughey** read the official timekeeping procedures and guidelines for the meeting's public appearances which began at: 4:11 p.m.)

George Lindquist representing UP Whitetails-Marquette County came before the commission to discuss deer issues in the UP. He stated that UP Whitetails along with MUCC support centerfire rifle use at night and that he would be happy to assist to mitigate any issues.

Lindquist mentioned Fisheries Order 201.16; regulations for the Big Island Lake Complex and stressed that they take another look at the size limits. The fish aren't that large; the 42 inch size for Northern pike isn't common, and don't grow that large in the area lakes. He suggested that a more reasonable size would be 36 inches. **Dexter** added that a review will be done this fall.

Nancy Warren from the National Wolfwatcher Coalition spoke on the need to ban deer feeding in the UP. She believes that recreational feeding increases disease transmission; specifically chronic wasting disease. She urged the commission to ban all recreational deer feeding.

Dale Hendershot, Michigan Trapper and Predator Caller's Association thanked **Commissioner Pontz** for attending the National Trapper's Convention in Kalamazoo. He added that it will be held in Escanaba in 2018. **Hendershot** also stated that he is pro centerfire rifle use at night.

Tim Kobasic, Resources Director from the Hiawathaland Trail Association, provided an update on what the association has been doing to get people educated to do things in a safe manner. He mentioned the grouse enhanced management systems (GEMS) and that this has assisted his group in setting a precedent regarding the need to respect wildlife and habitat. He added that the signage has been keeping people on the trails and not riding ORVs through the GEMS. **Kobasic** also thanked **Mason, Terry Minzey** and **O'Neill** for working with the association.

Brian Reynolds from UP Whitetails of Marquette thanked the commission for being an easy group to work with and added that they are a good group.

Dennis R. Ellos came to talk about wolves and that he feels that the number of wolves being allowed to roam our cities and forests are not under control. **Ellos** stated that the number of wolves in the state must be reduced as there are no longer any deer in the area. He asked for assistance in lowering the number of wolves in the western UP so deer hunting may be enjoyed in Michigan again.

Joe Allen from Marenisco talked about predator-prey and stated that last fall he caught 11 wolves in his coyote traps. He checked scat samples from wolf scat samples and came up with the remains of 14 fawns. He stated that deer populations are gone. **Allen** has caught over 100 wolves and released them over eight years. He said that wolves impact game populations. He thanked the commission for protecting whitetail antlerless deer with last year's regulation change, and added that it was a great move.

Ann McCammon Soltis, Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC) welcomed the commission to the 1842 Ceded Territory. Their primary job is to help the tribes that are a part of GLIFWC with the implementation of their hunting and fishing rights in the ceded territory. She highlighted a couple of ways that the state and Tribes work together. She spoke of a couple of specific initiatives; their enforcement division works with our enforcement division on the retrieval of ghost nets and that wild rice restoration is another collaborative venture. **Soltis** stated that there are many opportunities to work together and suggested the restoration of Buffalo Reef on Lake Superior.

Chauncey Moran talked about the passion of the people who volunteer and work for the natural resources of the state. He then presented the director with a freshly-baked blueberry pie, made from UP blueberries.

Chairman Matonich adjourned the public appearances portion of the meeting at 4:47 p.m. and called to order the regular meeting of the NRC at 4:48 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.

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

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

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

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

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

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION ACTION ITEMS

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

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

FOR INFORMATION ONLY – DIRECTOR

Chairman Matonich listed the “for information only” items 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 National Trappers Association Annual Meeting and Trade Show. She attended the Tb advisory meeting in Harrison; there are four new herds with bovine Tb in the area that will trigger a review of the split-state status.

Commissioner Schlaybaugh attended the Aquifer Society annual meeting in August which raises money for cold water projects.

Commissioner Crumbaugh thanked Ironwood and Gogebic Community College for their hospitality.

Commissioner Klarr had a chance to visit the federal hatchery near Deadman’s Hill to look at Lake trout. She is looking forward to the Liberty Hunt and turkey season.

Director Creagh thanked **Bill Moritz** and **Bill O'Neill** for doing a great job in his absence. He did some goose hunting on opening day with **Joe Robison** from Wildlife division, adding that he is a great guide.

Chairman Matonich and **Commissioner Richardson** attended the UP Habitat Workgroup meeting. He thanked **Jim Lorenson** and **Bob Jacquart** for their hospitality.

Next Meeting

Chairman Matonich announced that the next meeting of the NRC is scheduled for Thursday, October 13, 2016 at the MSU Diagnostic Center, 4125 Beaumont Road, Lansing. The committees meeting that day will be the NRC Marketing, Partnership, Youth and Outreach Advisory Committee, the Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee and the NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries.

Matonich also mentioned that the strategic meeting normally held during this time of the year will be scheduled to occur in early 2017.

Adjournment

Commissioner Crumbaugh made a motion to adjourn. **Commissioner Schlaybaugh** seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 4:54 p.m.

APPROVED: Date: 10/13/16



John Matonich, NRC Chairman



Keith Creagh, DNR Director