

MINUTES

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

August 11, 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

Bill Moritz, DNR natural resources deputy
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 2:00 p.m.

Michigan Natural Features Inventory Presentation **Yu Man Lee** and **Rebecca Rogers** from Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI) made a presentation to the commission about who MNFI is, what they do, and how they support the department. Their mission is "To guide the conservation of Michigan's biodiversity by providing the highest quality scientific expertise and information." They discover new knowledge through scientific research, define threatened and endangered species and communities by conducting research and field surveys, they discover, define and deliver the current biodiversity data through research, field work and stewardship of MNFI's Natural Heritage Database. The scientific data and expertise they share informs Michigan policies and decisions that impact endangered species and habitat and contribute to the state's current and future economic well-being and environmental stewardship. MNFI performs conservation through public engagement and support.

Parks and Trails Update Parks and Recreation division chief **Ron Olson** shared information on the land use order regarding designating Watkins Lake State Park and County Preserve in Washtenaw County, he noted that a management plan will be done in the future. On July 27, there was an event at Interlochen State Park marking the release of the second part of Michigan's water strategy. This second phase touched on water trails and commercial and recreational harbors. **Olson** also provided an update on the July 10 and 20 storm damage in the Upper Peninsula (UP). He thanked the Law Enforcement, Forest Resources and Parks and Recreation divisions for working together to clean up the storm damage. **Olson** reported that lodging numbers are up 8.3% over last year, slip nights are up 12.2%, ORV licenses are up 2.3% and trail permits are up 10.9%. The Outdoor Adventure Center (OAC) has surpassed

over 100,000 visitors in the last year with revenues up 8% over what was projected. **Olson** also provided information on the survey that has been given to those who have lodged in the state parks. He shared that 91% responded that they have had a good or very good experience. This indicates that staff is providing excellent customer service.

Partners in Conservation Award – Susan Lackey The Partners in Conservation Award was presented to **Susan Lackey** who was one of the founding members of the BIG 400, a non-profit organization with an overall mission focusing on public land and community partnerships, also balancing nature and commerce. She was a key advocate for the Watkins Lake State Park. **Lackey** has been a true partner in conservation and instrumental in her vision and direction for the protection and enhancement of Michigan's natural resources.

Wildlife Council Update Matt Pedigo, chair of the Wildlife Council along with **Jill Holden** from GUD Marketing provided an update on the progress that has been made in the past year on the highly-intensive research based project which is being used to inform the public about the role hunting, fishing and trapping play in conservation. A survey will be done again in 2017 to track the progress. After 56 days in the market, the goal was to reach 85% of audience exposed to campaign messaging a minimum of 9 times. They reached 95% with a frequency of 17 times in southeast and southwest lower Michigan. They have presence on TV, print ads, billboards, and bus wraps in Detroit and west Michigan. There were also radio ads, a Pandora ad, Mike Avery's Outdoor Magazine radio show, there were also sponsored ads on MLive, in the Detroit News and Free Press, digital display and paid social ads. **Holden** shared what is scheduled for phase II, which will be more informative messaging on wildlife management; what, how, why, hunting heritage and the connection to wildlife conservation. She shared examples of the stories they will be sharing. She added that they will be developing the materials, measuring campaign tracking and the 2017 spring survey.

Introduction of Dr. Kelly Straka, Wildlife Veterinarian Wildlife division chief **Russ Mason** shared some background information on **Dr. Straka**, the new veterinary supervisor, and introduced her to the commission. **Dr. Straka** replaces **Dr. Steve Schmitt**, who recently retired.

R3 Discussion Natural resources deputy director **Bill Moritz** provided an update on the department's progress on recruitment, retention and reactivation of hunters and the recent R3 Summit, hosted by MUCC. There were participants from a variety of agencies including Ducks Unlimited, National Wild Turkey Federation, Pheasants Forever, Trout Unlimited, MSU Extension, MUCC and the department. The group will be working on future participation in hunting and fishing and what needs to be done to reach new audiences and participation.

Committee Reports

Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee

Commissioner Klarr said that the committee received an update on current projects, trails update, a Upper Peninsula (UP) storm update and FEMA monies coming in for tornado shelters.

NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries

Commissioner J.R. Richardson stated that the committee received updates from Wildlife and Fisheries divisions. **Chief Dexter** reviewed mortality numbers in lake trout, and looked at pier fishing in Grand Haven. He also shared information on New Zealand Mud Snails, which have been found in the south, main, and east branches of the Au Sable river, also in the Boardman

and Pere Marquette rivers. Monitoring will continue. **Chief Mason** introduced **Dr. Straka**, and gave a synopsis of land use orders to regulate use of the Otsego Dam area in Allegan county and the land use order concerning restricting the use of motorized vehicles on specific hunting trails in three grouse enhanced management systems in the UP.

PUBLIC APPEARANCES BEFORE THE NRC

(**Stacy Welling Haughey** read the official timekeeping procedures and guidelines for the meeting's public appearances which began at 3:12 p.m.)

Jim Sweeney, Concerned Sportsmen of Michigan shared an update on the NW 12 mandatory antler point restriction (APR) area. His group examined the changes and possible trends that have occurred in the area counties since the regulations were implemented, focusing on two metrics; hunter participation and antlered buck harvest. Based on the information taken from recent DNR surveys, he stated that there does not appear to be any distinct pattern or clear correlation between mandatory APRs and hunter retention and/or recruitment in the NW 12. **Sweeney** said that the suggestion that mandatory APRs could be a solution to the problem of hunter loss in the NLP is unsupported. He also stated that it was anticipated that antlered harvest would drop during the first year of the mandatory APRs and rebound within the next several years. This has not been the case; a rebound has not occurred.

Tom Baird, President, Anglers of the Au Sable, expressed concern regarding the New Zealand Mud Snails. **Baird** stated that he wondered if the snails were brought in through stocked fish at a local fish hatchery. Their concern is that the Quality of Life departments' approach is a little too soft with respect to protection of the environment and to the resource. He would like the department to give this issue more attention.

Amy Trotter, Deputy Director, MUCC, came before the commission to talk about chumming and where she would like to see work evolve. Looking at quantity issue, she thought it had some merits. **Trotter** said that when there are a lot of options, it might stifle some creativity. She thought other things could have been looked at. She has heard about disease issues; Oregon's sodium sulfate issue. She talked about the regulation for VHS. She would like the commission to think about other options that could be looked at. **Trotter** knows there are people who are unhappy with the chumming ban.

Mark Biford is a fisherman who chums and thinks that there should be some middle ground to the chumming issue. He understands the social aspect, and sees where chumming affects the fly fishermen's fishing. **Biford** said that chumming works and is concerned about winter steelhead fishing; he stated that the only way to get fish during the winter months is to chum. He suggested giving it six or nine months to see the results and then would like the issue revisited. **Biford** said that a win-win would be that chum should be from Michigan weirs, VHS free, and be allowed to use no more than a quart.

Sam Morello, President, Michigan Bow Hunters Association, came before the commission to talk about centerfire at night, UP archery deer regulations and airbows. His group is concerned over the continuation of the no antlerless rule in the UP. They were against the regulation in 2015 and still are and thought that this would be a one-year event, not in the three year cycle. He questioned what data supports continuation of no antlerless licenses in 2017-18. **Morello** asked if the data collected from last two years would measure the impact of this regulation. In addition, regarding pneumatic arrow launchers, they would like to see the language in the

hunting digest read that this is not a legal way to hunt. **Morello** supports centerfire at night to help with controlling the coyote population. **Matonich** stated that carrying over the no antlerless regulation was put into the three-year cycle. In 2015, approximately 6000 antlerless deer were not harvested, which is a significant number. Review of this regulation will come next year.

Dave Peterson from the Great Lakes Council International Federation of Fly Fishers thanked the commission and departmental staff for the thorough job done in taking the position to ban chumming.

John Paige, Program Coordinator for the Ruffed Grouse Society (RGS) shared some antidotal stories about the reach of the Grouse Enhancement Management Sites (GEMS) program and stated that the program means a lot for retention and recruitment. **Richardson** thanked RGS for their partnership.

Bruce Wojcik, Director of Development from the American Woodcock Society and Ruffed Grouse Society expressed the full support from both groups for the GEMS and added that the GEMS are very conducive to recruitment of new hunters, hunters with disabilities and hunters who are trying to avoid hunting in the proximity of vehicles. Both groups expressed their full support for the road closures within the GEMS. GEMS support many local businesses. Both groups have spent many dollars to improve the habitat and on outreach for these GEMS. They are dedicated to continuing habitat work on the GEMS for the future. Personally, **Wojcik** travels all over the country, everywhere he goes he hears much buzz about the GEMS program and MI Hunt.

Art Pelon, President of National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) shared that they have been involved and support the GEMS and turkey tracks. The NWTF believes that closing trails to motor vehicles will provide a quality hunting experience for those involved. He said that the GEMS are beautiful, the game is there and NWTF appreciates everything the department has done promoting the program.

Dale Hendershot from the Michigan Trappers and Predator Callers Association (MTPCA) reminded the commission that MTPCA is sponsoring the National Trappers Convention and invited the commissioners to attend August 12-14 in Kalamazoo.

Chairman Matonich adjourned the public appearances portion of the meeting at 3:53 p.m. and called to order the regular meeting of the NRC at 3:54 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

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION ACTION ITEMS

Approval of Minutes, July 14, 2016 Natural Resources Commission Meeting

Commissioner Nichols made a motion that the minutes of the July 14, 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.

FOR INFORMATION ONLY – DIRECTOR

Chairman Matonich listed the “for information only” items on the agenda.

DIRECTOR’S ACTION ITEMS

Natural Resources Deputy Moritz listed the “director’s action” items on the agenda and indicated he would approve all items on behalf of **Director Creagh**.

COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Commissioner Pontz spent much of the last month in the UP. She was presented with a wedding gift from her fellow commissioners.

Commissioner Crumbaugh stated that she was looking forward to heading north and doing some fishing over the weekend.

Commissioner Richardson just returned from an Alaskan fishing trip. Governor Snyder will be in the UP next week and he looked forward to his visit.

Commissioner Klarr looking forward to next month’s meeting in the Lake Gogebic area.

Commissioner Nichols took his granddaughter to the OAC in Detroit and said that it was packed with kids. It was a phenomenal visit and his granddaughter wanted to know when she can go back. He suggested that the audience make time to visit the OAC.

Natural Resources Deputy Moritz shared that fishing has been good during the last month. He added that the metrics for people getting outdoors have been on the increase.

Chairman Matonich is working on planning next month’s commission meeting in Ironwood. He met with Safari Club International and the UP Habitat Workgroup and shared that the groups were impressed with everything that has been done in Michigan.

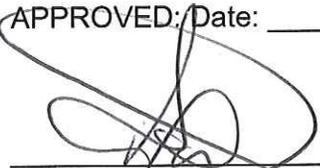
Next Meeting

Chairman Matonich announced that the next meeting of the NRC is scheduled for Thursday, September 8, 2016 at Gogebic Community College, E4946 Jackson Road, Ironwood. The committee meeting that day will be the NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries.

Adjournment

Commissioner Nichols made a motion to adjourn. **Commissioner Klarr** seconded and the meeting was adjourned at: 4:04 p.m.

APPROVED: Date: 9/8/16



John Matonich, NRC Chairman



Keith Creagh, DNR Director