

MINUTES

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION MEETING

February 9, 2017
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
Chris Tracy

Present for DNR staff

Bill Moritz, DNR natural resources deputy
Peter Manning, 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 2:35 p.m.

Parks and Trails Update Parks and Recreation division (PRD) chief **Ron Olson** provided information on the successful mParks conference held the previous week in Grand Rapids, which is a continuing effort to collaborate statewide with parks and recreation agencies. He shared three awards presented to the division; a design award for Silver Lake State Park day use area; a marketing award for the brochure that illustrates the recreational opportunities on state forest lands, campgrounds; and an integrated marketing award for the wines of Michigan campaign and connection to the great outdoor partnerships.

Olson reported on the media coverage on Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park and the core sample drilling by Highland Copper/Orvana Resources U.S. Corp. They own mineral rights on the far west end of the park; recently they decided to drill and have followed department surface use conditions and are in compliance with the law. This does not open the door to active mining; they were within their rights to update their core samples. It raised questions on the mineral rights that the department owns, they are actively matching up GIS with real estate records.

Parks and Recreation performance numbers provided include that recreation passport sales are up 2% since October, lodging is up 23% over last year at this time, harbor nights are up 208%, ORV permit sales are up 5%, and ORV trail use permits are up 8.9%. Snowmobile permits are down 21% for the month of January. The PRD is working with the Michigan Snowmobile Association and advisory groups looking at the long-term trends and funding and sustainability models.

Pure Michigan Hunt Winners Wildlife division chief, **Russ Mason** shared that 2016 was a monumental year for the program; over 51,000 applications were sold generating over \$259,000; an increase of 46.9% over last year due to some strategic marketing. Natural resources deputy **Bill Moritz** announced the three winners; **Michele Ketchum** of Sparta, **Richard Farris** of Almont, and **Jerry Peak** of Crystal. Each winner took home over \$4,000 worth of prizes all donated by Michigan companies and organizations.

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Chief **Mason, Chad Stewart** and **Jim Bowes** from the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) reported on the Mecosta County cervidae facility where CWD was detected. **Bowes** said that this incident is being responded to in a timely manner; there are on-going conversations with the operator; MDARD is working with DNR on indemnity funds, and depopulation should be complete by the end of February. **Bowes** thanked the DNR for their assistance with this incident. **Stewart** shared what surveillance efforts the DNR is taking in the nine township area located in both Mecosta and Montcalm counties to determine if CWD is in the free-ranging population; it is a multiple-year endeavor to reach a sample size of 2800 deer, with most coming from hunter-harvested deer. They are also working in conjunction with USDA Wildlife Services collecting road-kill deer in that area.

Governor Snyder's Budget Summary Finance and Operations **Erik Eklund** provided highlights of the Governor's fiscal year 2018 \$416.4 million budget recommendation for the department which includes \$19.5 million for state park infrastructure, \$6.3 million for recreational improvement projects, \$9.6 million for recreational boating infrastructure, \$3.85 million one-time General Fund to support wetland mitigation banking, \$5 million one-time General Fund to leverage investments for the Iron Belle Trail, and \$1.8 million General Fund for 10 new conservation officers.

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.

The commission recognized former commissioner **Tim Nichols. Matonich** shared that **Nichols** has been a great advocate in promoting diverse outdoor recreation opportunities with a special focus on Michigan's youth. He also added that **Nichols'** outstanding leadership, enduring commitment and extraordinary public service in protecting natural resources for all Michigan residents and visitors will make a difference well into the future. The commission presented **Nichols** with a resolution which they passed recognizing him for his service.

Committee Reports

Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee

Commissioner Klarr reported that they received a report on the Outdoor Adventure Center, the committee passed a resolution on the Menominee River Recreation Area management plan, and there was discussion on the Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park and the core drilling being done by Orvana Resources Klarr added that there would be a meeting the following day with director **Creagh** and the finance sub-committee.

NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries Commissioner Schlaybaugh shared that the committee received a fisheries update from chief **Dexter** which included information on the successful Black Lake sturgeon fishing season; however, one fish over the limit was taken. **Dexter** also reported on Lake Michigan lake trout stocking. Migratory game bird hunting season information was presented; the regulations are prepared in conjunction with federal and Mississippi Flyway frameworks. Populations are stable and seasons are similar with last year. The committee also received the bear trend analysis update and reviewed proposed bear quotas and regulations.

PUBLIC APPEARANCES BEFORE THE NRC

(**Stacy Welling Haughey** read the official timekeeping procedures and guidelines for the meeting's public appearances, which began at 3:00 p.m.)

Representative Cole shared that he was in attendance to hear about information on the bear baiting with barrels topic.

Jerry Keck from the Michigan Longbow Association spoke about bear regulations stated that he does not want to see baiting with barrels or early baiting.

Mike Thorman, legislative director from the Michigan Hunting Dog Federation which represents 54 different dog groups thinks the department and the commission did a good job when they lowered license quotas. As a Red Oak bear management unit (BMU) hunter, he believes that tag reductions have improved the population in that area. He stated that the bear forum was unanimous against raising the number of tags in this BMU. **Thorman** said that the number of tags should stay where they are now and could possibly be raised during the next regulation cycle. He suggested that raising tags 30% and adding three or four more days to the hunting season would yield the same results as doubling the quota and there would be less hunter pressure on the already sparse habitat. With the success rate high in that area, **Thorman** asked the commission to consider this suggestion. They would also like to start experimental early feeding, which may deter them from going into towns when they initially get up from hibernation.

Amy Trotter, deputy director from MUCC, stated regarding bear regulations that MUCC has policy on public land bait barrels and since 2009 they have been opposed. In 2016, they voted to regulate chocolate, either by volume or by quantity. They hope that the Law Enforcement division would use discretion in the field for the first year of this regulation. In regard to the Red Oak BMU, with last year's quotas about 250 were harvested, the bear forum would prefer that the quota stays the same.

Trotter also talked about the slow response on the Mecosta county CWD case, and the need for the depopulation to be done quickly. MUCC wants other facilities watched more closely.

Bob Walker from the United Sportsmen's Alliance spoke on the topic of antler point restrictions (APRs) and stated that he does not want a hunter's choice plan for shooting bucks. He wants the rules and guidelines that are in place are followed. **Walker** also stated that he is against mandatory APRs and is in favor of a combo license.

Merle Jones representing Michigan Predator Hunters for Centerfire at Night shared some statistics from the successful Great Lakes Predator Challenge and noted that most importantly there were no safety issues. He thanked the commission for the regulation change. **Chairman Matonich** suggested that **Jones** continue the education on safety.

Mindy Koch and **Dave Borgeson, Sr.**, representing the Michigan Resource Stewards talked about their concerns with high fence operations in Michigan based on the CWD finding in Mecosta county. They believe that it's time to re-energize discussions on what factors we should be controlling that will minimize the risk of CWD spreading in the state. **Koch** stated that the state is looking at a loss of hunters and deer as evidenced by other states battling the disease. The Stewards passed a resolution that calls for no new facilities and to phase out facilities that are not coming into compliance. She shared a couple of suggestions including getting better control on the transportation of live animals, carcass transportation needs to be banned and a density discussion is needed. **Koch** also stated that there are things we can do now including taking action on baiting and feeding, not having APRs, requiring compliance of CWD testing and permanent revocation of non-compliance facilities. The Stewards would like to see the departments involved pull together a workgroup to look at controllable factors and come up with recommendations on actions that would minimize the risk of disease transmission. They added that the funding issue needs to be addressed publically and that general funds should be tapped.

Don Bell, president of Archery Bear Hunters of Michigan stated that his group is in agreement with all bear quota recommendations with the exception of the proposed increase for the Red Oak BMU, they want that quota to remain the same.. Archery Bear Hunters agree with the total ban on chocolate and take a no stand on baiting with barrels on public land. They also do not support earlier baiting. **Bell** also shared that they would like nonresident licenses to be capped at 2%.

Lincoln Rohn from Michigan Deer Hunters - Let em Go, Let em Grow shared that this group supports expanded APRs throughout the state. They are seeing bigger, older bucks. **Rohn** added that the majority of younger hunters want the bigger buck.

Bob DuCharme, advocacy director and **Erik Schnelle**, president, from Quality Deer Management Association (QDMA) stated that they work to provide high quality, sustainable deer populations, wildlife habitat and ethical hunting experiences through research, education, advocacy, and hunter recruitment. They strive to achieve a healthy, balanced herd; CWD threatens all the progress they've made. **Schnelle** said that immediate control measures must be taken in the area it was detected and that QDMA fully supports the department in their efforts to detect and eliminate CWD. Disease prevalence must be established. They are unhappy with the delay in depopulating the farm in Mecosta county and would like the depopulation escalated. He also said that the farm should be depopulated now and worry about the indemnification afterward. **DuCharme** stated that QDMA wants to assist with getting rid of CWD in Michigan. He added that with improved herd dynamics we could bring in more nonresident hunts and their dollars into the state. **DuCharme** added that after survey data is collected, they would like to ask for permanent APRs in the Northwest 12 and to expand it to the remainder of the state.

Tim Dusterwinkle, president of the Michigan Bear Hunter's Association stated that they oppose increasing non-resident tags; it should be kept two percent. They oppose tag increase in Red Oak unit, in the Baldwin unit they oppose the 94% increase, they would like a supplemental

feeding program in the spring, they like all Upper Peninsula recommendations with the exception of Newberry where they'd like to see a ten percent decrease. They would like baiting to begin July 8 statewide. **Dusterwinkle** invited all commissioners to come hunt to training with hounds with the Bear Hunter's Association this summer.

Jim Sweeney representing Concerned Sportsmen of Michigan gave the commissioners a summary on what has occurred with CWD in other Midwestern states.

Gina A. Bozzer from Kuhn Rogers, PLC talked about the land exchange letter application from **Mr. Moore** and wanted to request that the current application from the **Rosa's** be tabled. She added that the applications should be considered simultaneously to determine which property would better serve the department's management goals. She believes that the **Moore's** offer would best serve those goals and is of greater value.

Nancy and **Joe Hudson** from the UP Bear Houndsmen came before the commission to state that the UP bear groups work unified and think **Kevin Swanson's** proposals are well done. Their group supports the conservation order as written. **Hudson** also added that they are concerned about CWD and support management efforts and will assist when they can. **Mr. Hudson** added that he does not want to see a change in the bear quotas.

Jeff Antes from Bacon Creek Quality Deer Co-op in Montcalm County, a 3500 acre co-op that manages deer spoke on the topic of APRs. He indicated that communication is the key to making their co-op work. He believes that supporting APRs will help keep young hunters interested.

Merle Shepard, representing Safari Club International (SCI), indicated that his organization has spent much money on bear research in Michigan. SCI agrees with the bear license and quotas as proposed. They do have some concerns on Red Oak BMU quotas, they are against the use of barrels for baiting and do not want baiting with chocolate. In the Lower Peninsula they would like to have same opening dates for bait hunting as in the UP. Concerning CWD, SCI would like to be on CWD workgroup.

Rob Nixon stated that he is not in agreement with quota numbers for Baldwin BMU. The numbers are too high and cannot support this kind of hunting pressure. He is in favor of a 20% increase, a supplemental feeding program in May and June and the BMU should open on September 10.

Sam Morello, president, Michigan Bow Hunters, stated that the organization supports the ban on chocolate for bear baiting, they are not in favor of early baiting bear regulations, they are not in favor of bait barrels on public land and that there is no need for an additional ten days for baiting.

Jim Brauker, Michigan Deer Hunters, Let em go, Let em grow, shared a handout on mandatory APRs; an article which will be published in Michigan Out of Doors magazine. He shared survey results from this organization of more than 21,000 members. Results indicate that the largest age bracket, the over 60 group want to be able to shoot any buck but the younger hunters, who will still be hunting in 20 years want the culture to change. Brauker's results indicate that they support APRs.

Jason Morrison, representing Michigan Hunting Dog Federation, Michigan Bear Hunter's Association and UP Bear Houndsmen Association support the increase of hunting dogs to eight. He also said they need more time to get bait out.

Dave Buikema, provided a deer co-op update which included local license sales numbers from Mecosta County. He believes the increase in license sales is due to the success of the co-op. Satisfaction rates prior to and after joining co-op were at 44% now are up to 77%. **Buikema** stated that APRs would keep hunter retention rates high.

Tony Smith, president, Lower Peninsula Deer Management Initiative (LPDMI), clarified that there are no mandatory APRs proposals in front of the NRC currently, only the re-survey in the northwest 12 region to see what the support level for that area is. He added that there is no push for one-buck rule in Michigan or abolition of combo tag. **Smith** also stated that LPDMI, QDMA, Let em Go, Let em Grow, are in support of CWD response plan, they are interested in depopulating the state's hot zones and dealing with this disease in a serious manner. With mandatory APRs; they are seeking adjustment for consideration for an unrestricted tag on combo they like the four-point on a side.

Chairman Matonich adjourned the public appearances portion of the meeting at 5:37 p.m. and called to order the regular meeting of the NRC at 5:38 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.

Bear Regulations and License Quotas, Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 1 of 2017

Matonich stated that current order that they had for information is exactly how it will be written regarding quotas for action. He asked that a complete write-up on the rationale for increases/decreases in Gwinn, Baldwin and Red Oak BMUs be submitted to the commissioners before the March meeting. **Matonich** asked that the number of dogs for hunting and training be changed to eight and eight.

Migratory Game Bird Hunting Seasons, Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 2 of 2017

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION ACTION ITEMS

Commissioner Klarr made a motion that the minutes of the January 12, 2017 NRC meeting be approved. **Commissioner Tracy** supported the motion. **Matonich** called for discussion, there being none, a vote was taken and the motion carried with the exception that **Commissioner Pontz** abstained due to her absence at the January meeting.

DIRECTOR'S ACTION ITEMS

Natural resources deputy **Bill Moritz** listed the "director's action" item on the agenda and indicated that he would sign all on behalf of director **Creagh**. **Moritz** also commented on the Rosa Exchange, noting that the department's process for evaluating applications is consistent with Natural Resources Environmental Protection Act statutes for land exchange facilitation and the exchange of state lands.

Moritz added that on February 2, 2017, **Creagh** signed a memo making changes to hunting and fishing license discounts. The memo eliminates the ten percent discount on non-residential all-species fishing licenses, returning the fee to \$76.00. The memo also discontinues free replacement licenses, replacements for non-kill tags will cost \$3 and the replacements for kill tags will cost the same as the original license purchased.

COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Commissioner Pontz thanked all for attending the day's meeting and appreciates the input received in advanced of making decisions. She was part of awards ceremony for distinguished faculty at Michigan State University, one went to **Jordan Burroughs** for her collaboration with the Department of Natural Resources.

Commissioner Crumbaugh said that it was nice to see department representatives at Great Lakes Crops Summit on mitigating crop damages. She commended the department for being proactive and engaging with constituents before there is an issue.

Commissioner Richardson has been attending many banquets. He added that the CWD Task Force has been working since December and they will extend the opportunity to add a member from SCI.

Commissioner Klarr went to school of Natural Resources symposium at University of Michigan; director **Creagh** was on the panel which discussed government's role in many arenas. This outreach to the public was invaluable.

Commissioner Tracy noted that the public engagement for the day was excellent. He attended the MSU Kellogg Biological Center dinner; noteworthy discussion included that there is a gift to refurbish bird sanctuary facilities and the center is looking to raise more money. At the dinner, **Director Gross** announced tentative plans to retire.

Natural resources deputy Moritz been working on the national monarch butterfly issue. There is an estimated 90% reduction, and there is a proposal to put them on endangered species list. There is a loss of habitat, which is mainly milkweed. Good habitat for butterflies is also good habitat for many species of wildlife. The upcoming Farm Bill will be an important part of conversation.

Chairman Matonich said that he and **Richardson** attended the all-staff meeting in Marquette. He commended the quality of the meeting and the quality of the staff. The Natural Resources

Commission work session cancelled the day before this meeting has been rescheduled for Wednesday, April 12.

Next Meeting

Chairman Matonich announced that the next meeting of the NRC is scheduled for Thursday, March 9, 2017 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 Tracy made a motion to adjourn. **Commissioner Crumbaugh** supported and the meeting was adjourned at 5:56 p.m.

APPROVED: Date: 3/9/17



John Matonich, NRC Chairman



Keith Creagh, DNR Director