

MINUTES

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

January 11, 2018
MSU Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory
4125 Beaumont Road
Lansing, MI 48910

Present for the Natural Resources Commission

Vicki Pontz, chair
J.R. Richardson, vice chair
Rex Schlaybaugh
Christine Crumbaugh
Louise Klarr
Chris Tracy
John Walters

Present for DNR staff

Peter Manning, legal counsel, Office of the Attorney General
Keith Creagh, director
Bill O'Neill, DNR deputy director
Trevor VanDyke, DNR legislative/legal director
Brooke Parmalee, DNR legal staff
Stacy Welling Haughey, UP coordinator
Cheryl Nelson, executive assistant to the NRC

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair Vicki Pontz called the Committee of the Whole meeting to order at 2:25 p.m.

Introduction of New Chair **Director Creagh** congratulated **Vicki Pontz** on her appointment as the chair of the commission.

Introduction of New Commissioner **Chair Pontz** introduced and welcomed **Commissioner John Walters** to the Natural Resources Commission.

Parks and Trails Update **Jackie Blodgett** shared two issues; due to high water levels and severe storms in the western part of the Upper Peninsula (UP), two miles of county road 107 in the Porcupine Mountains State Park is eroding along the lakeside. This important road is the access to Lake of the Clouds and Sky Hill and campground. Parks and Recreation division (PRD) is working with the road commission along with the Michigan Department of Transportation on a short-term and long-term plan to work on this area. **Blodgett** said that sales of snowmobile permits are up 21%.

Office of the Great Lakes Update **Director Jon Allan** told the commission that he is excited that the Office of the Great Lakes (OGL) is now a part of the department. He talked about the State of the Great Lakes report, and highlighted work done in the Menominee river. **Allan** noted that OGL recently announced \$350,000 in grants for water trails along Michigan's over 3,000

miles of coastline. He talked about the new Water Heritage project that will include an educational Great Lakes exhibit that will travel to six Michigan communities sharing information about local water resources.

Social Media Update **Kristin Phillips** and **Tyler Czarnopis** presented a year in review of the department's social media efforts through Facebook, Instagram and Twitter that amounted to over 365,000 followers. **Czarnopis** said that the department's feeds have been viewed over 968,000 times with comments, likes and shares; an increase of over 34% from 2016.

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Workgroup Recommendations **Chad Stewart, Dr. Kelly Straka** and **Dr. James Averill** presented the workgroup's recommendations to the commission. **Straka** provided background information on what made each member a relative choice for this group. She also talked about the charge that directed the workgroup. **Drs. Averill and Straka** presented the five recommendations of the group: 1) pursue the help of an outside marketing agency to develop messaging for Michigan's vision for CWD surveillance and management; 2) form a consortium of states and provinces to seek federal, state and private funding to share research on CWD surveillance methods, diagnostic tools, transmission pathways and management practices; 3) work cooperatively with the Agriculture and Rural Development commission to assess the effectiveness and direction of privately-owned cervid facilities, with an emphasis on biosecurity and CWD risk factors; 4) continue to employ a science-based strategy for CWD management; and 5) the commission should develop statewide, science-based management plans based on regional prevalences of CWD. The group also recommended a statewide ban on the sale of agricultural commodities for deer bait.

Chair Pontz thanked the group for their time and dedication to Michigan's natural resources and included that the commission and department are fully committed to the workgroup's recommendations and are looking forward to the public engagement process. **Pontz** also requested that the recommendations be discussed during the Committee of the Whole portion of future meetings. There will be public engagement over the next several months in an effort to engage stakeholders and the public in the development of the CWD management recommendations. **Director Creagh** indicated that there is a tentative timeline for the procedure which will include talk, communication and outreach in February, research in March, captive cervidae in April, harvest and removal in May, management plans in June, which would lead to regulation changes in July. He said that there is a general need for outreach and education. Social media posts and town hall meetings will be used for engagement. **Creagh** added that an active and effective engagement strategy with the stakeholders is needed. **Commissioner Tracy** asked about getting a piece that would explain why a consortium is needed. **Pontz** added that it is realized that there are parts of the recommendations that are not in the commission's scope of approval. **Creagh** talked about the funding, diagnostics and bringing back information on how this disease has been handled in other states. **Pontz** wrapped it up by saying how much the commission has appreciated the work done thus far and the work to be done in the future. She also addressed stakeholders saying that the commission will be going to them for their input and responses.

Legislative Report: **Anna Mooney**, legislative liaison, provided a written report of legislation related to the department.

Committee Reports:

Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee (MSPAC): Commissioner Klarr reported that the committee received a very impressive presentation on the AmeriCorps summer program that is part of the parks system. The committee acted on a resolution for a General Management Plan for Cheboygan state park. The MSPAC will be moving their February meeting to September, which is being held at Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park to have their meeting in a more park-like setting and so the committee can get a first-hand feel of the infrastructure of several UP state parks.

NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries: Commissioner Schlaybaugh said that **Chief Dexter** provided information on \$10.5 million investments at the Thompson Hatchery in the UP, which will allow for an additional 250,000 walleyes to be raised, 15,000 muskellunge raised, along with numerous other improvements. The Little Manistee hatchery will receive approximately \$1.75 million to repair and replace a number of failing capital items. **Jay Wesley**, basin coordinator, presented a report on the Lake Michigan Fisheries Plan. Wildlife **Chief Mason** reviewed the falconry regulations that will come before the commission in February along with the common merganser/swimmer's itch amendment. **Schlaybaugh** added that the committee would recommend that the merganser regulation be held over until February. **Chad Stewart** provided the committee with the late season elk report, and added that Wildlife division would not seek a January elk hunt.

PUBLIC APPEARANCES BEFORE THE NRC

(**Stacy Welling Haughey** read the official timekeeping procedures and guidelines for the meeting's public appearances which began at 3:43 p.m.)

Jim Sweeney representing the Concerned Sportsmen of Michigan said that the focus for CWD management needs to be on containment of the geographical spread of the disease and keeping the prevalence rates as low as possible. **Sweeney** wants the commission and department to take a pro-active approach to try to limit the spread of CWD in Michigan.

Bob Fisher spoke about youth recruitment and retention in the soon-to-be expanded CWD zones and buffer zones. He said that the youth hunt is a good start, and recommended that youth be allowed to use any legal firearm during the month of December in the CWD zone.

Mark Jones and **Mary Rosseel-Jones** spoke about frogs, Sandhill cranes and Mourning doves. Regarding frog hunting, **Mr. Jones** would like to see reconsideration of bag limits, they need to be lowered; changed to later season dates, which would allow for additional breeding; and reconsideration on the use of artificial lights. He said that the method of spearing does not result in immediate death, it is a slow, agonizing process, through which the frogs feel pain. With respect to Sandhill cranes and Mourning doves, **Mr. Jones** said that the population is not adequate and therefore, they should not be made a game species.

Erik Schnelle, president, QDMA, talked about what recent harvest statistics have been and shared Pennsylvania's steps with regard to antler point restrictions (APRs). Their numbers are similar to Michigan's numbers with CWD. Michigan QDMA is willing to be partners to address this disease emergency. They would like to see APRs allowed throughout the state.

Sam Morello, president, Michigan Bow Hunters Association, requested that the department and commission actively pursue the extension throughout the state in urban areas such as Ann Arbor, Jackson, etc., that pose liability toward deer, have city ordinances that prohibit hunting; these rules can be changed to allow archery hunting in urban areas. They would like the department and commission to take an active role in the education and communication for urban hunting in these areas. **Morello** said that the archery hunters in the state are ready and willing to help.

Curtis Blankespoor, Ph.D., talked about merganser regulations and the parasites carried by the birds. He had concerns with Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 1 of 2018.

Blankespoor recommended removing the harassment and/or lethal take of common mergansers as viable options for swimmer's itch control.

Ron Reimink, representing Michigan's Swimmer's Itch Partnership, talked about standard protocol for qPCR for single lakes. He asked the commission to make qPCR the standard testing method; it is less expensive and more cost effective.

Dan Eichinger, executive director, MUCC, conveyed to the commission that MUCC as a group is fully committed to partnering to solve the CWD problem in Michigan. **Eichinger** believes that the future of the deer herd depends on the work we do and the actions taken in the upcoming months.

Kent Syers from United Deer Farmers of Michigan talked about carcass movement into Michigan by hunters with regard to CWD; he added that there needs meaningful enforcement and education.

Pat Hartsoe said that she is against a Sandhill crane hunt and wants them kept off the game species list. She asked that the commission take everyone's point of view if the commission decides to move forward on this issue. **Hartsoe** pointed to false information that initially came out when the wolf issue was the topic. She doesn't want to see this happen with Sandhill cranes.

Renee Kesmeen and **Robert Allen** came before the commission to talk about Sandhill cranes saying that they nearly vanished from Michigan but now are on the rebound. He is an advocate for the cranes.

Julie Baker is also an advocate for Sandhill cranes and shared several comments regarding depredation permits, and Representative Lauwers' recent inaccurate comments. She talked about the availability of depredation permits for farmers, noting that there were only 74 permits issued in 2015. **Baker** asked the commission keep her comments in mind before deciding to make Sandhill cranes a game species.

Ron Shaver stated that a proactive approach is needed for disease management focusing on CWD. He recommended 1) rescind all programs that use APRs, 2) ban baiting, and 3) enhanced testing. **Shaver**, 92, wants future generations to share the same hunting experiences he has had for the last 77 years. He believes in sound science over social science.

Bernard Shaver spoke on CWD and disease control. He has been a hunter since 1965, and it has been a family affair. He recommended that baiting be banned and said that he supports sound science, not social science.

David Hogan and **Jeff Alkire** from Michigan Hawking Club thanked the commission for approving the upcoming falcon regulations and that they liked being a part of the 3-year review process. **Alkire** thinks that Michigan is far ahead of other states and they support the regulations before the commission today.

Michael Leonard is pleased with CWD workgroup's recommendations. He said that hunters, department, commission, and stakeholders must work together and use sound science.

Dick Zook thanked the commission, the director and the CWD workgroup for all the work put in on the CWD recommendations. Three things that **Zook** said will help in the long-run urgency, communications with the hunting community and doe harvest.

Chair Pontz adjourned the public appearances portion of the meeting at 5:01 p.m. and called to order the regular meeting of the NRC at 5:02 p.m. She 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

Pontz reviewed the items up for information only.

Falconry Regulations, Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 2 of 2018, FOR INFORMATION ONLY

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION ACTION ITEMS

Approval of Minutes, December 14, 2017 Natural Resources Commission Meeting

Commissioner Tracy made a motion that the minutes of the December 14, 2017 NRC meeting be approved. **Commissioner Crumbaugh** supported the motion. **Pontz** called for discussion, there being none, a vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

Approval of the 2018 Calendar of Issues

Commissioner Klarr made a motion that the 2018 Calendar of Issues be approved. **Commissioner Crumbaugh** supported the motion. **Pontz** called for discussion, there being none, a vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

Common Merganser Control Permits and Regulations, Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 1 of 2018

Commissioner Schlaybaugh made a motion that Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 1 of 2018, Common Merganser Control Permits and Regulations be adopted.

Commissioner Tracy supported the motion. **Pontz** called for discussion, **Commissioner**

Richardson made a motion to hold Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 1 of 2018, Common Merganser Control Permits and Regulations over to the February meeting to allow time for additional review. **Commissioner Walters** seconded the motion. **Pontz** asked for discussion, there being none, a vote was taken and the motion to hold the order over 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 Walters said that he is honored to serve on the NRC. He and his wife have enjoyed snowshoeing in Michigan during the past month.

Commissioner Schlaybaugh had a wonderful holiday, spending time snowshoeing and cross-country skiing.

Commissioner Richardson apologized for missing the December meeting but thanked the hunters for the safe hunting seasons.

Commissioner Klarr shared that she had some fishing adventures over the holidays and attended a Safari Club banquet in Dallas.

Commissioner Tracy thanked the audience for attending and sharing their time and effort in attending commission meetings.

Director Creagh shared that the State of the State address will be January 23, the budget will be coming out in February, and a meeting was held with EPA regional administrator, **Cathy Stepp**, looking for opportunities for the department to work with her agency.

Chair Pontz said that she is honored and humbled to be the commission's chair and that she appreciates the audience for sharing their thoughts. Goals for the upcoming year include increased communication, transparency and increased partnership to face issues that come before the commission.

Next Meeting

Chair Pontz announced that the next meeting of the NRC is scheduled for Thursday, February 8, 2018 at Lansing Community College's West Campus, 5708 Cornerstone Drive, Lansing. Committees meeting that day will be the NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries and a possible Governance committee. New committee assignments will be shared before the next meeting.

Adjournment

Commissioner Tracy made a motion to adjourn. **Commissioner Klarr** seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 5:11 p.m.

APPROVED: Date: 2/8/18



Vicki Pontz, NRC Chair



Keith Creagh, DNR Director