



## Western Upper Peninsula Citizen Advisory Council DNR Division Reports

Date of Production: January 2020

This documentation is provided by Michigan DNR staff as a supplement to verbal reports that will be distributed to the Western UPCAC at the January 2020 meeting in Baraga.

### *Upper Peninsula Regional Coordinator Update – Stacy Haughey, UP Regional Coordinator*

#### ***DNR Public Meetings***

January 9	Natural Resources Commission Meeting, Lansing
January 15	DNR Recreation Grant Workshop, Baraga Lakeside Inn, 9am
January 15	Western UP Citizens' Advisory Council Meeting, Baraga Lakeside Inn, 5:30pm
January 16	DNR Recreation Grant Workshop, Marquette Staybridge Suites, 9am
January 16	UP Sportsperson Coalition Meeting, DNR Shingleton Field Office, 6pm
January 17	DNR Recreation Grant Workshop, Little Bear East–St. Ignace, 9am
January 23	Annual Aquatic Resources Meeting, Marquette Township Hall, 10am
January 28	UP Sportsperson Coalition Meeting, Les Cheneaux Sportsmen's Club–Cedarville, 1:30pm
February 6	UP Sportsperson Coalition Meeting, Bay College MTEC Bldg Room 2031–Escanaba, 6pm
February 13	Natural Resources Commission Meeting, Lansing
March 11	UP Sportsperson Coalition Meeting, DNR Marquette Office, 6pm
March 12	UP Sportsperson Coalition Meeting, DNR Crystal Falls Office 6pm Central
March 19	Natural Resources Commission Meeting, Lansing

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#### ***U.P. State Park & State Sponsored Activities***

January 17	Van Riper State Park–Lantern Lit Snowshoe
January 18	Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park–Lantern–Lit Ski, Snowshoe or Walking Trail
January 25	Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park–Lantern–Lit Ski, Snowshoe or Walking Trail
January 25	Fayette Historic State Park–Lantern–Lit Snowshoe, Hike or XC Ski
February 1	Tahquamenon Falls State Park–Guided Snowshoe Hike & Lantern–Lit Snowshoe Trail
February 1	Mackinac Island–Greaney Grove–Twilight Turtle Trek
February 1	Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park–Lantern–Lit Ski, Snowshoe or Walking Trail
February 8	Tahquamenon Falls State Park–Guided Snowshoe Hike & Lantern–Lit Snowshoe Trail
February 8	Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park–Lantern–Lit Ski, Snowshoe or Walking Trail
February 15	Tahquamenon Falls State Park–Guided Snowshoe Hike & Lantern–Lit Snowshoe Trail
February 15	Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park–Lantern–Lit Ski, Snowshoe or Walking Trail
February 21	Van Riper State Park–Lantern–Lit Snowshoe
February 22	Tahquamenon Falls State Park–Guided Snowshoe Hike & Lantern–Lit Snowshoe Trail
February 22	Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park–Lantern–Lit Ski, Snowshoe or Walking Trail
February 29	Tahquamenon Falls State Park–Guided Snowshoe Hike & Lantern–Lit Snowshoe Trail
February 29	Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park–Lantern–Lit Ski, Snowshoe or Walking Trail

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## ***Recent DNR Press Releases***

For full details, go to: [www.michigan.gov/dnrpressroom](http://www.michigan.gov/dnrpressroom)

- January hunting and trapping opportunities (1/7/20)
- Artists sought for residence program at Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park (1/6/20)
- Snowmobile trails segments closed in Mackinac County (1/3/20)
- Time to buy your snowmobile permit (1/3/20)
- Snowmobile trail cleanup ongoing in UP (1/2/20)
- Statehood Day, winter fun, outdoor skills classes and more (1/2/20)
- Showcasing the DNR: Reflecting on the state parks centennial year (1/2/20)
- Showcasing the DNR: 10 cool things the DNR did in 2019 (12/26/19)
- High water levels force continued dredging at Grand Traverse Harbor (12/23/19)
- Happy Little 5K update: Registration opens Jan. 1 at 9 a.m. EST (12/23/19)
- 2020 sturgeon season, expert outdoor learning, campground hosting (12/23/19)
- Recreation, conservation grant workshops offered in January (12/20/19)
- DNR recommends \$4.6 million in grants to support park improvements (12/20/19)

### ***Eastern UPCAC Update***

The Eastern UP Citizen's Advisory Council Meeting met on December 10<sup>th</sup> in Newberry. Old Business included a continued update on CWD and an update on Brevort Lake's Equestrian Campground development. New Business included an update on oak wilt in the UP by forest health specialist Simeon Wright, a review of ORV licenses and trail permit fees, a deer season recap, council member vacancies due to retirements, and discussion on a proposed ORV seasonal restriction land use order. Subcommittee reports were light with no meetings reported. The next EUPCAC meeting will be held on February 19<sup>th</sup> in Newberry.

### ***December 2019 NRC Meeting Summary – Ed Golder, Public Information Officer***

The Natural Resources Commission met at Fifth Third Ballpark near Grand Rapids on December 12, 2019. Major actions taken:

The Commission approved new hunting regulations at Yankee Springs State Recreation Area. The regulations open about 350 acres of land around Chief Noonday Lake and Baker Lake to hunting. This land is currently closed to hunting. The regulations close about four acres of land along the northwest corner of Long Lake to hunting that is currently open.

Director Dan Eichinger approved:

- The results of an oil and gas lease auction that took place in October. The auction resulted in the leasing of 5,442 acres of state-managed public land in 15 counties. The auction raised \$91,906 for the State Parks Endowment Fund.
- An order to regulate target shooting at Lapeer State Game Area. The order prohibits target shooting in locations beyond the established target shooting area. The purpose is to limit the impacts of target shooting such as debris, lead shot and conflict with neighbors and other users.
- An order to establish a firearm deer hunt for certain private lands in Alpena County during portions of January next year. The goal of the hunt is to help the department meet management objectives for bovine tuberculosis.
- Ten land transactions. Details can be found in the NRC agenda.

**The Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries** met first. Fisheries Chief Jim Dexter said the division has been working to develop an inland walleye plan to create consistency of regulations for anglers. The division hopes to bring a proposal forward for the fall. The division is also looking at whether to recommend catch-and-immediate release regulations for northern pike and walleye, as it has done for bass, muskellunge and sturgeon. In January, the department is expected to acquire Walled Lake, a 42-acre water body in Montmorency County. The lake has a good bluegill fishery and the division is looking at proposing regulations on the lake that would provide for catch-and-release fishing using artificial lures only.

Acting Wildlife Chief Rex Ainslie told the committee that Wildlife staff have been extremely busy with deer check this year. Rex said he will complete his service as acting chief at the end of the year. Dan Kennedy from Wildlife will take over as acting chief after that. The hope is to have a permanent wildlife chief in place by April, Rex said.

Chad Stewart of Wildlife reported preliminary results from the 2019 firearm deer season. Unique license buyers were down 2.9 percent this year over last year, and deer harvest tags were down 2.3 percent year-to-year. This is in line with historical deer hunter attrition, indicating that new regulations this year – including a baiting ban in the Lower Peninsula and a portion of the Upper Peninsula – did not affect hunter participation. Deer check was up 4.2 percent across the state this year compared to last (the exception being the U.P., where it was down). The number of bucks checked across the state was up 13.3 percent this year over last. Chad cautioned that the number of checked deer does not necessarily correlate to harvest. The department will be able to gauge actual harvest through its annual deer harvest survey, which will take place after all seasons are finished and be available next year. Surrounding states – Illinois, Missouri and Wisconsin – have seen declining harvest in the last few years. Indiana’s harvest is up slightly.

The department this year tested about 35 percent of the deer submitted to check stations for chronic wasting disease. As of Dec. 6, the department had this year tested 15,831 deer statewide. Thirty-eight of those deer have tested positive for CWD – 18 from Montcalm County, 13 from Kent County, five from Jackson County and two from Gratiot County. Since 2015, when the first free-ranging deer in the state was discovered with CWD, we’ve found a total of 154 deer with the disease.

During the **Committee of the Whole**, Nicole Toman of the Parks and Recreation Division gave a presentation on state forest campgrounds. In 2012, management of State Forest Campgrounds transferred from the Forest Resources Division to the Parks and Recreation Division. Since that time, the divisions have been co-managing these areas. A land use order that would finalize this transfer will be before Director Eichinger for a final decision next month. Under the order, State Forest Campgrounds would continue to be managed by both divisions. The transfer would provide consistency for park rangers doing enforcement and provide an opportunity for additional funding sources for maintenance and improvements at the campgrounds. Forest certification on these lands would continue, hunting and fishing access would continue and the lands would retain their rustic character.

The Commission honored longtime conservationist Thomas Bailey with the Thomas L. Washington Lifetime Commitment to Conservation Award. Tom Bailey, a Petoskey-area resident whose career included 34 years at the helm of the Little Traverse Conservancy, has played an integral role advocating for the state’s natural resources and recreation opportunities. The son of a Michigan Department of Natural Resources wildlife biologist, Tom said that his early life was steeped in conservation work and education. Tom co-founded the Heart of the Lakes Center for Land Conservation Policy and the Top of Michigan Trails Council, and currently serves on the Lake Superior State University Board of Trustees and the Iron Belle Trail Fund Campaign. Throughout his career, Tom has worked with many national, state and local nonprofit groups for the betterment of the conservation field. He also has published a book: “A North Country Almanac: Reflections of an Old-School Conservationist in a Modern World.”

The award is named for Thomas L. Washington, past director of Michigan United Conservation Clubs and a giant in Michigan conservation. During his life, Washington helped build coalitions of conservationists and environmentalists to achieve landmark initiatives that benefit Michigan residents to this day.

An update on legislation affecting the department is below.

**HB 4313 (H-2) – Create a Pheasant Stamp – Rep. Howell**

This bill amends the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection act by creating an annual pheasant hunting license. The annual license would cost \$25.00 and would require all hunters to also have the base hunting license. The Department shall use the money to acquire, restore or enhance lands to be managed for the benefit of pheasants, and to release pheasants on lands managed for the benefit of pheasants.

- This bill was passed out of the House Committee on Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation and referred to the House Committee on Judiciary.
- The Administration is neutral on this legislation.

**HB 4687 – Deer and Elk Feeding – Rep. Hoitenga**

This bill seeks to amend the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act to allow an individual to engage in deer and elk feeding during the open seasons.

- This bill was passed the House of Representatives and the Senate and will be presented to the Governor for her consideration.
- The Administration is opposed to this legislation.

**House Bills 5002 and 5003 – Youth Fishing License – Reps. Howell and Brixie**

This bill package would reinstitute a \$2.00 fee for resident and nonresident youth under 17 years of age who wish to obtain an all-species fishing license. Youth under 17, would still be allowed to fish in Michigan without a license. However, youth under 17 who wish to purchase an all-species fishing license, would once again be able to do so for a \$2.00 fee.

- The bills were passed out of the House Committee on Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation and referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means.
- The Administration has not taken a position on this legislation.

**HB 5132 – Allow Use of Trotlines or Juglines for the Taking of Nongame Fish and Snapping Turtles – Rep. Albert**

This bill amends the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act to allow for the use of trotlines or juglines on inland lakes and rivers to take nongame fish and snapping turtles. Under the legislation, individuals using this method of take would not be allowed to: use live bait, set the lines within 600 feet of dam, or use more than 10 trotlines.

Additionally, individuals would be required to have contact information on the trotline or jugline, check all trotlines at least once each day, remove fish and animals caught in the lines, remove lines when not in use and ensure that juglines much be attended by or within sight of anglers at all times.

- The bill was referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation and one hearing has been held.
- The Administration is opposed to this legislation.

**HB 5140 – Provide Waiver of Fishing and Hunter License Fees for Volunteer Firefighters – Rep. Hoitenga**

This bill would amend the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, Act 451 of 1994, to allow volunteer firefighters to be eligible to obtain any resident fishing or hunting license for which a lottery is not required, free of charge.

- The bill was referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation.
- The Administration has not yet taken a position on this legislation.

**HB 5167 – Provide for Automatic Yearly Renewal Options for Certain Licenses – Rep. Cherry**

This bill allows for the implementation of yearly automatic renewal for all-species fishing licenses beginning March 1, 2020 and for base, fur harvester, and waterfowl licenses by March 1, 2021. Additionally, beginning March 1, 2022, the DNR would need to implement automatic yearly renewal for combination hunt and fishing licenses, deer licenses and limited hunt quota licenses contingent on a feasibility study for these licenses due to the legislature no later than July 1, 2021.

- The bill was referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation.
- The Administration has not yet taken a position on this legislation.

### **HB 5168 – Modify Period for Purchase of a Preference Point or Entry for Limited Draw Hunts – Rep. Howell**

This bill would amend the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, Act 451 of 1994, to allow a hunter to purchase a bear license preference point at any time during the licensing year. It also allows a hunter to purchase a chance in the random weighted drawing for an elk hunting license at any time during the licensing year.

- The bill was referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation.
- The Administration has not yet taken a position on this legislation.

### **HB 5230 – Exempt Veterans from Recreation Passport Requirements – Rep. Kennedy**

This bill would amend the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, Act 451 of 1994, to exempt a veteran with a valid, government-issued veteran identification that is operating or a passenger of a motor vehicle from the recreation passport requirements.

- The bill was referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation.
- The Administration has not yet taken a position on this legislation.

### **HB 5244 – Establish Firearm Deer Hunting Season to Begin on November 5 – Rep. Eisen**

This bill would amend the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, Act 451 of 1994, to require a regular firearm deer hunting season to begin on November 5 and end on December 1.

- The bill was referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation.
- The Administration has not yet taken a position on this legislation.

If you would like to learn more about these and other bills, you can access the Michigan Legislature website at [www.legislature.mi.gov](http://www.legislature.mi.gov).

## *Division Updates*

### **Law Enforcement Division (LED): Lt. Ryan Aho, District 1 Law Supervisor**

- **CO Ethan Mapes** has transferred back to Ontonagon County effective January 14<sup>th</sup>.
- **CO Shannon Kritz** has transferred back to District 1. She will be working Menominee County.
- **CO Jeff Dell** is back from his deployment in Afghanistan. We are happy to have him back safe and sound working in Menominee County.
- **CO Anna Viau** was the closest officer to a medical call of an older gentleman experiencing chest pain. CO Viau arrived on scene to find the man conscious and breathing, but in a lot of pain. EMS arrived shortly, and CO Viau assisted in clearing a path through the snow and getting the man safely into the ambulance.
- When a call from Iron County Dispatch came over the radio about a rollover accident, **CO Anna Viau** was the closest unit. When she arrived, CO Viau, along with the assistance of an Iron County deputy and a passerby, ensured that the passengers of the vehicle were ok and were safely able to get out of the vehicle. Thankfully, no one was injured, including the two small children in the car.
- **COs John Kamps and Ariel Young** received information about an individual believed to have taken a deer without purchasing a deer license. The COs went and interviewed the individual who confessed to taking the deer without a license and borrowing his brother's tag. After furthering questioning, it was also determined that he had harvested a deer and then bought tags after the fact. The antlers and crossbow used were seized. Charges pending prosecutor review.
- **CO Ariel Young** was out patrolling the lakes within her county when she stopped and checked some ice anglers on Hamilton Lake. Upon pulling into the parking lot, it was noted that there was a large group of people talking and then quickly dispersing and heading back to their shanties. CO Young made contact with the individuals and found a short Northern pike hidden in a bag near a shanty. Through further questioning, one of the subjects admitted to the fish being his and that he did not have a fishing license. The subject was also on the ice with a snowmobile that had expired registration and no helmet. CO Young issued a citation for the undersized pike and seized the fish and issued warnings for the snowmobile registration and no helmet.

- **COs Josh Boudreaux and Cody Smith** participated in the 11th annual Marquette County “Shop with A Cop” event. There was a larger number of children in comparison to the previous year and both COs and children had a great time running around the store shopping for the children’s families.
- **CO Josh Boudreaux** assisted Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) Det. Trey Luce with a complaint regarding individuals throwing construction debris into Lake Superior prior to incoming storms so that it would be washed away. CO Boudreaux followed up with the property owner shortly after he and Det. Luce examined the remnants scattered along the beach and was able to get a confession from the property owners who didn’t believe they were doing anything wrong. The owners were simply trying to save a trip to the local landfill. A citation was issued for litter and the property owners were ordered to clean up their mess or face additional charges.
- **CO John Kamps** followed up on a possible illegal deer that was reported. During the investigation, it was determined that the individual would commonly hunt and purchase his licenses after harvesting an animal. The subject was interviewed and proudly showed off his trophies including a very large 7-point buck from this rifle season, a 6-point from last year and a large turkey. The subject confessed to shooting all three of the animals and then purchasing the licenses afterward. The deer antlers and skulls were seized along with the rifle used to take them. CO Kamps has forwarded the information to the Marquette County prosecutor on the two illegal deer and the illegal turkey is being forwarded to the county in lower Michigan where it was taken.
- **CO John Kamps** made contact with a deer hunter as he was walking out of the woods. The hunter stated that there was someone sitting on his bait pile with no hunter orange clothing. CO Kamps walked to the bait pile and found a hunter wrapped in a white bed sheet for snow camouflage. When the individual saw the CO, he started looking frantically through his belongings for an orange hat. A citation was issued for hunting without hunter orange clothing. The hunter was questioned why he was hunting on somebody else’s deer bait and reminded about hunter ethics.
- **CO Jenni Hanson** was out of service when the Gogebic County Recreation deputy requested her assistance with the search and rescue of a lost snowmobiler in Wakefield Township. The lone male subject from Iowa had traveled down a closed trail and became stuck in the ungroomed snow. CO Hanson and Gogebic County Deputy Jesse Yesney were able to travel backcountry with their patrol sleds to locate the subject and bring him and his snowmobile back to the proper trail.
- **COs Jenni Hanson and Anna Viau** followed up on a Report All Poaching (RAP) complaint regarding an individual hunting after dark in Iron County. The COs met with and interviewed the suspect at his place of residence. While there they observed his harvested deer as well as a doe supposedly shot by his friend. After a thorough interview it was determined that the doe was shot by one individual but tagged with another individual’s tag. COs Hanson and Viau seized the deer and interviewed the other suspects who both admitted that the deer was illegally shot. A warrant was requested through the Iron County Prosecutor’s Office for the improper use of the tags.
- **CO Doug Hermanson** conducted investigations on deer that appeared to have been tagged illegally during the firearm deer season. CO Hermanson interviewed multiple subjects and was able to obtain confessions for an antler point tagging violation along with two subjects who used tags purchased by another person. Charges have been requested with the Houghton County Prosecutor’s Office for the three subjects.

### **Fisheries Division: George Madison, Western Lake Superior Management Unit**

The following are the western Upper Peninsula fisheries division highlights for the period of November 7<sup>th</sup> through January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

#### **Escanaba Field Office (Darren Kramer)**

- Reviewed draft 2020 Fishing Guide
- Staff attended the annual biologist’s meeting in Gaylord.
- Joined WLSMU and ELSMU staff for 2020 work-planning meeting.
- Technicians are repairing equipment and entering survey data.
- Biologists are analyzing data and writing reports.
- Joined with other agencies (WDNR, USFWS) for initial planning for a Green Bay reef evaluation project.

#### **Baraga Customer Service Center (George Madison)**

- Participated in the development of an acoustic fish tagging project for the Portage-Torch Lake waterway that will begin in April 2020.

- Inspected the Calumet Dam to review the structural integrity of this dam during high water events.
- Held two 2020 work planning sessions; one with the Ottawa National forest and a second meeting with fellow UP fisheries staff. The Portage-Torch Lake waterway survey will be one of the largest walleye population estimate projects planned for this spring.
- Planning for upcoming DNR Fisheries winter and spring public meetings.
- The winter session of the Lake Superior Technical Committee was held at the Ramada Inn in Marquette.

### **Marquette Fisheries Research Station (Dr. Ed Baker & Dr. Troy Zorn)**

- Data analysis, meetings, report writing.

### **State Fish Hatcheries (Jan VanAmberg, Hatchery Manager)**

#### ***Thompson State Fish Hatchery***

##### Fish Culture

- After a few fish health treatments for bacterial gill disease the steelhead are now doing very well. Most are now on track to meet target size in the spring although fish health losses have brought our projected stocking number down from 614,000 to 600,000 yearlings.
- Chinook production was shifted to Wolf Lake this cycle so the inside tanks could be coated with epoxy as part of the capital outlay project.
- Nursery tank screen frames, standpipes and other associated fish culture items are being repaired and cleaned.

##### Maintenance

- Progress has slowed on the Capital outlay project with winter setting in. Work continues inside the Coolwater building with interior block work completed and dry wall going up on the ceiling. About half the inside tanks at the coldwater facility have the final coat of epoxy applied and the rest are to be final coated in February. There are issues with the texture and finish of the final coat on the tanks completed and we are working with the general and subcontractor to resolve those issues.
- Building new interchangeable screen frames for outdoor raceways.
- Spending a lot of time (much more than normal December/ January) with snow removal.
- Maintenance staff busy with various repairs of equipment.
- Finished replacing all outdoor lighting with LED. A huge improvement in lighting while reducing energy use significantly. This completes lighting change recommendations from the energy audit.

#### ***Marquette State Fish Hatchery***

##### Fish Culture

- Technicians are completing maintenance on fish stocking equipment needed for spring.
- Inside tank room preparations for fry have been completed.
- Lake trout and splake first inventory and tanking process has begun.

##### Maintenance

- Held first meeting with DTMB for the design work for the Cherry Creek bank stabilization project. Decision to contract OHM using an ISID contract.
- Maintenance staff busy with various repairs of equipment.

#### ***Fish Marking and Fish Transport***

##### Administration

- Process continuing to permanently fill the Fish Stocking and Marking Biologist position (now called Health, Marking and Stocking Biologist)

##### Fish Marking

- Little activity this month.

##### Fish Transport

- New MIOSHA rules require fall restraint systems be installed on our fish planting units. Directed Cadillac Fabrication to install fall restraint system on one fish planting unit so we could evaluate. Evaluation complete and we are moving forward with the intent to be in compliance with rules within 12 months.
- On-going- Submitted order for HSFH Peterson replacement. Working with VTS and DTMB to get a bid for refurbishment from an alternate bidder.

## **Forest Resources Division: Tom Seablom, Western UP District Supervisor**

- Effective December 29th, the FRD will be implementing a new organizational structure. The major change is the elimination of the field coordinator position and reassignment of that position's direct reports. For the WUP, one change will be the GNA foresters will be reporting directly to the FMU's where they are housed rather than at the District level.
- Units are starting to work on 2022 YOE Inventory. Open house and compartment review schedules will be posted online, along with other state forest inventory information at: [Michigan.Gov/Forestry](https://Michigan.Gov/Forestry).
- As of January 6th, 315 timber sale contracts are open WUP Wide. This represents 750,083 cords of timber on 44,145 acres, valued at approximately \$34.9 million. Included in this are 13 GNA sales representing 3,980 cords of timber on 3,222 acres, valued at approximately \$2.5 million
- WUP units report 46 Active Timber Sales in the WUP totaling about 6,000 acres. Most units report slow demand for timber with several offerings going no bid or being sold for the minimum bid amount. The Baraga unit reports improving demand for quality hardwoods.
- Forest protection staff has been working on snowmobile program work. Including trail clearing from the severe storms in December. They have also been busy with equipment maintenance and training for the upcoming spring fire season.
- Starting January 1<sup>st</sup> open enrollment for the Commercial Forest Program will continue until April 1<sup>st</sup>. For more information on the Commercial Forest Program go to [Michigan.Gov/Commercialforest](https://Michigan.Gov/Commercialforest).
- DNR forest health staff worked with local U.P. Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA) staff on hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA) survey training in preparation for extensive HWA survey efforts along the U.P. Lake Michigan shoreline this winter. HWA has not been detected in the U.P., however there is concern that established HWA populations in SW MI could spread with migratory birds or through other avenues.

## **Wildlife Division: John DePue, Wildlife Biologist-Baraga County**

- **Deer:** Preliminary results from the 2019 deer season have the deer harvest down ~11% across the UP. Statewide deer harvest tags were down 2.3%, which follows the historical deer hunter attrition. A lot of 2.5 and 3.5 year-old bucks were harvested this year. The majority of the deer camp surveys are in WMU 425 and data is currently being compiled.
- **CWD:** As of January 6<sup>TH</sup>, 1814 deer have been tested for CWD throughout the UP, the majority from Dickinson, Iron, and Menominee Counties.
- **Habitat:** We have completed the Sturgeon River Sloughs Wildlife Management Area infrastructure improvement project. An Agri-drain installed in the farmed field in November was the last of the planned construction. The improvements made will increase our ability to supply water to the impoundments and allow us to flood planted fields. We will plan a field visit event for the public with Ducks Unlimited next summer.



- **Bats:** Work is underway at the Mead Mine in the Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park to increase bat survival by cooling the temperature inside the mine, which bats use as winter hibernacula. The MI DNR obtained federal funding for this work and is taking a novel approach to reduce the impacts on the bat population from the disease White-nose Syndrome.

## Parks & Recreation Division: Doug Rich, WUP District Supervisor

### State Park/Recreation Area/Scenic Site/Forest Rec Units

- **Baraga State Park:** Early snowfall has started snowmobile season early. Contractors are still working on campground construction projects and is nearly complete.
- **Bewabic State Park:** Monitoring the water system into the winter season, had issues winterizing the park this year, possible faulty shut off valve. Phase 100 study for wastewater disposal at Bewabic has begun. Snow has come early this year, plowing and pushing back banks already. Cleaning and organizing shop.
- **Bond Falls Scenic Site:** Closed for the season.
- **Craig Lake State Park:** Winter storm cleanup continues from the Thanksgiving weekend storms.
- **Fort Wilkins Historic State Park:** Campgrounds are currently closed, we are getting a few winter cabin rentals. Planning is still ongoing for water and sewer upgrade project in east campground.
- **Lake Gogebic State Park:** One bay in the cold storage building was converted into a heated workshop. Work has begun on the construction of a tiny house that will go to the Union Bay campground in the spring of 2020. A cross country ski/snowshoe program has begun with our first visitors using the trail over the Christmas Holiday.
- **McLain State Park:** Construction on the tiny house cabin is underway.
- **Menominee State Recreation Area:** Closed for the season.
- **Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park:** Fall color season was busy with hunters and early snow allowed the ski hill to be opened on 12/20. Thanksgiving snows caused trail and day use area cleanups. Park programs for snowshoeing and skiing have begun. Erosion control work on M-107 was completed by Baraga Field Office and County contracted vendors.
- **Twin Lakes State Park:** Finished with our fall leaf pickup 1 day before the early snow arrived. No campers during Nov. Dec has been a month filled with snowstorms. We received 125 inches of snow this month and had to start roof shoveling in Dec. Finished our painting of the new entrance at the lodge, but flooring will have to wait till spring.
- **Van Riper State Park:** Winter storm cleanup from the Thanksgiving weekend storms, staff have been busy with snowplowing.
- **Wells State Park:** Some rentals for cabin and lodge over the past few months. Attendance was similar to last year's numbers.
- **Baraga Field Office:** Armored shoreline on County Rd 107 at the Porkies.
- **Escanaba Field Office:** Unit staff assisted at Menominee River Railroad Dock BAS to clean up the site after storms deposited hundreds of yards of material in the site parking lot and roadway.

### Boating Reports (BAS = Boating Access Sites)

- **Bewabic State Park:** Pulled all skid piers.
- **Twin Lakes State Park:** Pulled the last skid pier out early Nov, we must start earlier as we had a lot of snow already. FRD assisted with pulling out the skid piers.
- **Wells State Park:** Work on erosion at Menominee BAS site in Menominee Co. Escanaba field office assistance needed for the removal of debris from the site. More work is needed to clear site in the spring of 2020. Debris and erosion along the campground shoreline at Wells may be an issue this spring for cleanup.
- **Baraga Field Office:** Pulled skid piers. Winterized equipment. Picked up curbing left by contractors at Bergland boat launch.
- **Copper Harbor State Harbor:** Fuel system upgrade at Copper Harbor is schedule for spring of 2020.

### Personnel News, Vacancies/Hires, Recognition

- **Baraga State Park:** Supervisor is currently working out of class as the Manager at the Porkies.
- **Bewabic State Park:** Ranger Brittany Sides took a full-time position at the Porkies. Getting hiring packet together for vacant Commissioned Ranger position at Bewabic.

- **Fort Wilkins Historic State Park:** Lead Ranger 9 position has been submitted to HR.
- **Lake Gogebic State Park:** Hiring of a third position of the Lake Gogebic traveling crew has been suspended for FY 2020. The hiring packet for the vacant A9 position has been submitted.
- **Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park:** General office assistant Sandy Richardson retired after nearly three decades at the Porkies.
- **Wells State Park:** Ranger 9 hiring packet has been submitted to HR. Ranger 8 position will be transferring to Van Riper after the law enforcement academy in March 2020.
- **Baraga Field Office:** Lead Worker Bob Erva retired after 31+ years of service. David White was hired in the park ranger position. Interviews were held for the Accounting Assistant position that will assist with FEMA/HCTI work and transition to McLain/Twin Lakes admin support over the years as FEMA work subsides. A recommended candidate has been submitted to HR for approval.

### Multi-Use Trails

- With the approval of the supplemental funding, several trail projects will be able to be implemented in the western UP. Of major importance will be the multi-use extension of the state line grade into Wakefield, MI and the re-decking of the Little Carp Trestle which opens the Baraga-Arnheim grade into Baraga, MI. These and other projects are expected to be constructed during 2020 season.
- **Menominee State Recreation Area:** Trail proposal on Piers Gorge Unit of MRSRA is being reviewed by other Divisions.
- **Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park:** Trails are still being cleared of storm debris, but many are open for winter recreation and programs.

### Snowmobile Trails

- Heavy snows and winds over Thanksgiving weekend downed trees over much of the western UP snowmobile system. Clubs worked hard to clear and prepare trails for the December 1st opening. Trails are open while additional clean-up work continues. The department issued a press release to assist with reminding users to ride with caution and expect debris on trail.
- **Baraga State Park:** The snowmobile trail has been rerouted down the county road and through the front of the campground to prevent damage to newly renovated full hookup sites. Season began early, the local groomers are already out and there is a good base on the trail.
- **Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park:** Trails are being groomed but the base is thin and bare in some spots.
- **Twin Lakes State Park:** Met with local club on groomer arrival at the shop.

### Pathways

- **Van Riper State Park:** All trails at Blueberry Ridge Pathway are open.
- **Wells State Park:** Pathways for ski trail and hiking trails within Wells State Park had fallen trees due to the amount of snowfall in the last month. Trails are currently open, but work is still needed in spring for additional cleanup.
- **Escanaba Field Office:** Unit staff assisted Van Riper staff in clearing downed trees on Blueberry ridge pathway.

### Planning Report

- **McLain SP** - Phase 1 design and construction is 100%. Phase 1 included a new toilet shower building, a new campground loop with 20 modern campsites (20/30/ and some 50-amp electric) and a new campground circulation road.
- **McLain SP** - Phase 2 design and construction is 100% complete. Phase 2 includes a new State Park entrance road and contact station, 16 modern campsites, and a renovated day use and beach area on the west end of the park.
- **McLain SP** - Shoreline armoring - 100% complete. The installation of 1,140' of shoreline armoring is complete. The shoreline armoring is intended to provide protection to a portion of McLain State Park shoreline that is infrastructure heavy (electric, water, and sewer lines, campsites, and primary access road serving 91 campsites).
- **McLain SP** - Phase 3 design is 25% complete. Phase 3 includes replacement of the park's sewage lagoon, additional shoreline armoring in front of the park's well and sanitation station, and cabin renovations/relocations.

- **Bergland Boating Access Site** - Parking lot, dock, and ADA site improvements completed August 1, 2016. Additional asphalt paving and site lighting improvements became complete Dec. 14, 2019 and has been re-opened to the public. Minor punch list items remain.
- **Copper Harbor historic light house and light keepers' residence** - Construction of the masonry repairs were completed on 10/2/2019. Some additional scope items may be completed in June 2020. \$250,000 in design and construction funding has been allocated.
- **Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park** - North Country / Iron Belle Trail bridge over the Little Iron River. Design of a new bridge is 100% complete. Construction proposed in 2020. Total project funding = \$300,000.
- **Eagle Harbor State Harbor** - Engineering, analysis, and design of improvements at Harbor will continue into 2020. Improvements to the site utilities, mooring facility, and harbor master building are being considered. A design contract was awarded to Edgewater Resources. The data collection of existing site conditions is underway. The analysis of potential of design improvements is 95% complete, a public meeting was held August 21, 2019. The DNR reviewed development recommendations on October 28, 2019. A total of \$625,000 has been allocated for design and construction. Conversations with Eagle Harbor Township have been initiated concerning partnership opportunities.
- **Fort Wilkins Historic State Park** - Design of the replacement of the parks water lines is 90% complete. Construction is anticipated in 2020.
- **Van Riper State Park** - Upgrades to the water treatment plant and water supply systems - \$175,000.00 has been allocated for design and construction. Design is 100% complete. The construction of the project is now 100% complete.
- **Baraga State Park** - Construction of upgrades to the campground electrical and wet well has received is approximately 97% complete and anticipated to be substantially complete on 1/31/2020. Includes 14 full hook up campsites.
- **Oman Creek Boating Access Site** - Long range planning: \$170,000.00 has been awarded for the design of a groin. The groin design will be informed by a littoral drift study. The analysis of proposed design improvements is 100% complete. Two groin alternatives were considered, a Public Input Session was held on July 24, 2018. The public input demonstrated support of investing in groin alternative #1. The DNR has selected Groin Alternative #1 and is proceeding with the completion of plans, specifications, permits, and construction easements.
- **Ford River Boating access site** - Design of asphalt paving and site lighting improvements was completed in 2019. The project has obtained EGLE permits and anticipated USACE permits mid-January 2020. The project is proposed for construction in 2020.
- **Bewabic State Park** - An analysis of replacing the park's on-site sewage disposal began on 12/12/2019. The project looks to replace aging sewage disposal for both campground toilet shower buildings and the sanitation station.
- **Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park** - Lake Superior Sportsman's Club - A phase 100 study of development opportunities was completed on 11-15-2018. The final design of a new in-door shooting facility and clubhouse is 25%. The preliminary design became 90% complete on 12-12-2019. Construction is anticipated in 2021. A \$300,000 MNRTF grant award is anticipated to be announced.
- **Menominee River boating access site** - \$100,000 has been awarded for Design of parking lot and asphalt improvements. Additionally, the funding may be utilized for shoreline armoring due to Lake Michigan High water levels. A Jan. 24, 2020 meeting with the City of Menominee is discuss project priorities.
- **Cedar River State Harbor** - \$300,000 has been awarded for design and construction of improvements / repairs to the Harbor's fuel dock (which is below current Lake Michigan water levels), replacement of a section of sidewalk which failing, and replacement of potable water fixtures within the existing utility pedestals.
- **Lake Linden Trail** - \$951,684.80 has been invested since 2014 for the evaluation of bridges and culverts along the Lake Linden trail between Hancock and Calumet. The funding has aided the DNR in analysis, design, and permitting in response to the Houghton County flood of June 2018. The project design is at 90% complete of schematic design considering two options (re-build trail or naturalize trail). The DNR will review the options, funding considerations, and public input prior to selecting an option for advancing to final design. Significant construction efforts would not be anticipated until 2021.
- **Lake Gogebic State Park** - Headquarters remodeling efforts continue with the goal of completion being early spring of 2020. Planning continues for the traveling crew busy season of 2020 with 15 substantial projects being projected around the U.P.

The Natural Resources Commission met in Lansing on January 9<sup>th</sup>. Major actions:

The commission voted to reinstate a five brook trout bag limit on all Upper Peninsula brook trout streams. There had previously been a 10 brook trout bag limit on 33 select streams in the U.P. The change, which follows the recommendation of the department based on biological and social science, came in the form of an amendment to Fisheries Order 200.

Director Dan Eichinger approved:

- A land use order finalizing the transfer of management of State Forest Campgrounds from the Forest Resources Division to the Parks and Recreation Division. Under the order, State Forest Campgrounds will continue to be managed by both divisions. The transfer provides consistency for Parks rangers doing enforcement and provides an opportunity for additional funding sources for maintenance and improvements at the campgrounds. Forest certification on these lands will continue, hunting and fishing access will continue and the lands will retain their rustic character.
- Four land transactions. Details can be found in the NRC agenda.

In other business:

#### **Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries**

Fisheries Chief Jim Dexter previewed proposed changes to Fisheries Order 206 to provide for new regulations for Walled Lake in Montmorency County. The state recently acquired the land surrounding the lake, making it part of the Pigeon River Country State Forest and providing public access for the first time. Regulations for Walled Lake – which has a high quality bluegill fishery -- would limit fishing to catch-and-release only and allow only use of artificial lures.

Jim introduced Dan Kennedy as acting wildlife chief. Dan has been with the DNR for 20 years and has most recently served as the endangered species coordinator for the department. He has been working in Washington, D.C., advocating for the Recovering America's Wildlife Act. Next month, the Wildlife Division will have its annual report prepared and ready for distribution, Dan said. The number of applicants for the Pure Michigan Hunt this year is similar to last year, Dan said. The department will be announcing the Pure Michigan Hunt winners in a Facebook event on Jan. 24. Dan also previewed the proposed regulations schedule for the coming year.

Chad Stewart of the Wildlife Division summarized the 2019 elk hunting seasons. During both seasons -- the first in the fall and the second in December – state hunters harvested 160 elk. Tribal hunters harvested 21 elk. The Wildlife Division will be bringing proposed elk regulations to the commission for information in March and for action in April.

#### **Committee of the Whole**

Director Dan Eichinger introduced Commissioner Rex Schlaybaugh as the new chair of the commission, and Anna Mitterling of Mason as a new commissioner. Gov. Gretchen Whitmer announced these changes to the NRC in late 2019.

Scott Whitcomb of the Executive Division updated the commission on the department's compliance with Public Act 288 of 2016, which requires the department to annually inventory state forest roads, map them and determine which are open to motorized use. The changes from this year would remove about 13 miles of road from state forest maps for conventional and ORV use; delete about 300 miles of roads due to data cleanup of non-existing or duplicate roads; and add 98 miles of roads to maps that were not previously included in the inventory. Across the state there are nearly 14,000 miles of state forest roads. More than 12,300 of those miles are open to ORV use.

A report on legislation affecting the department is below.

## *January 2020 Legislative Updates – Legislative & Legal Affairs Office*

### **HB 4687 – Deer and Elk Feeding – Rep. Hoitenga**

This bill seeks to amend the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act to allow an individual to engage in deer and elk feeding during the open seasons.

- This bill was passed the House of Representatives and the Senate and vetoed by the Governor on December 18, 2019.
- The Administration opposed this legislation.

### **HB 5225 – Provide Veteran Preference for Hunting Lotteries – Rep. Witwer**

This bill would amend the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, Act 451 of 1994, to provide first preference to veterans for lotteries for hunting.

- The bill was referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation.
- The Administration has not yet taken a position on this legislation.

### **HB 5290 – Places the Waters of the State in the Public Trust– Rep. Rahbi**

This bill would amend the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, Act 451 of 1994, to protect the public trust resources of the State of Michigan. The bill specifically lists the waters of the state, including groundwater, as being held in the public trust.

- The bill was referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation.
- The Administration has not yet taken a position on this legislation.

### **HB 5291 – Modifies Consumptive Use in Water Withdrawals – Rep. Hood**

This bill would amend the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, Act 451 of 1994, to modify the definition of “consumptive use” with regards to water withdrawal from the Great Lakes basin.

- The bill was referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation.
- The Administration has not yet taken a position on this legislation.

### **HB 5292 –Provide for Protection and Conservation of Water under DNR Control – Rep. Pohutsky**

This bill would amend the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, Act 451 of 1994, to place the protection and conservation of water under the Department of Natural Resources control, rather than the purview of the Department of Energy, Great Lakes and the Environment.

- The bill was referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation.
- The Administration has not yet taken a position on this legislation.

If you would like to learn more about these and other bills, you can access the Michigan Legislature website at [www.legislature.mi.gov](http://www.legislature.mi.gov).