

MINUTES

NATURAL RESOURCE COMMISSION

Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee

February 11, 2016

Outdoor Adventure Center

PRESENT FOR THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

Commissioner Louise Klarr, Chair
Commissioner Tim Nichols, Co-Chair
Commissioner Christine Crumbaugh, Co-Chair

PRESENT FOR THE MSPAC

Mike McDonald
Julie Clark
Chris Graham
Ann Conklin
Jeff Gray

ABSENT

Bob Hoffmeyer
Tom Bailey
Jim Bradley
Jim Hendricks
Mary Pitcher
Amy Trotter
Mike Foote

OTHERS PRESENT

Jim Rudicil, Executive Director, Muskegon Sports Complex
Dan Stencil, Executive Officer, Oakland County Parks and Recreation
Melissa Prowse, Oakland County Parks and Recreation
Sue Wells, Oakland County Parks and Recreation
Drew YoungeDyke, MUCC
Dale Hendershot, MTPCA
Michael Schipna, MTPCA
Everett Emery, MTPCA
Merle Shepard, SCI
DNR Management and Staff
Paul

MICHIGAN STATES PARKS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (MSPAC)

OPENING COMMENTS

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Commissioner Louise Klarr. Commissioner Klarr introduced all the committee members and welcomed new committee co-chair Christine Crumbaugh.

Committee member **Ann Conklin** reminder everyone the MRPA annual state conference begins next week, on February 16, 2016. This year's conference is being held at the Grand Traverse Resort in Traverse City, Michigan.

Commissioner Klarr introduced **Linda Walter** as the host today at the Outdoor Adventure Center (OAC). Linda spoke briefly about the history of the location and the newly renovated building. Linda talked about the work being done at the OAC, and the many types of events that have been hosted since the opening. The OAC is currently celebrating Michigan's statehood and black history month. The OAC is looking forward to the start of its park of the month program beginning in March 2016. The OAC will feature the Waterloo Recreation Area as their first park of the month. Linda finished with telling everyone that the goal of the OAC is to inspire, educate and connect the public to the outdoors.

Committee member **Mike McDonald** added that it is no accident that Linda Walter is doing a wonderful job as she is so well trained, noting that Linda worked for many years with the Clinton Township Parks and Recreation prior to coming to the OAC.

Ron Olson added that both Milliken state park and Belle Isle state park are in close proximity to the OAC. Ron introduced staff members from each location: Mr. Mike Terrell, Mr. Karis Floyd, Mr. Jacob Brown, Ms. Tressa Bryant, Ms. Darlisa Rickman and Mr. Scott Pratt. Mr. Olson added that these folks all do an outstanding job of caring for our state parks.

Many of the committee members shared various stories about bringing family, friends and groups to the OAC. They were excited about how well received the OAC has been and the number of visitors that are frequently attending events, meetings etc. here. Committee member **Ann Conklin** thanked the DNR, on behalf of the profession, for providing such an outstanding destination for the public. Ann indicated that the various groups she has brought to both the OAC and Belle Isle have been very impressed with the difference at Belle Isle.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Minutes were approved for the December 14, 2015 planning session. No changes were noted.

LUDINGTON STATE PARK GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

Debbie Jenson presented an overview of the Ludington State Park General Management Plan. The plan was reviewed and approved by the Stewardship sub-committee on February 3, 2016 with minor adjustments. All information regarding the plan was included in the committee packets and is viewable on the committee document library. Ludington State Park is located between Lake Michigan and Hamlin Lake and one of the largest in Michigan. Debbie noted that this park offers diverse recreation opportunities; it has great fishing, an expansive dune system and is very rich in history. The trail to the lighthouse is heavily utilized; we would like to provide more amenities for the walk out there such as park benches. Lighthouse complex itself is managed by the Light Keepers Association. There is infrastructure work that needs to be addressed. A vehicle and pedestrian circulation study is also a goal; as parking in some areas is an issue. We hope to increase parking in the beach house area and study alternative transportation options.

The DNR received much public and stakeholder input on the plan; with over 1,000 responses to the public survey. There was public comment from the Little River Band, a website with updates, and public input meetings were held. Some of the goals of the management plan are to protect endangered species in this park; we want to dedicate the natural area so that it is formalized. We are also looking at a non-motorized connection between Ludington state park and the City of Ludington.

Chris Graham, Chair, Stewardship sub-committee, noted Ludington state park is one of the first sand dune parks in Michigan. He also confirmed that there is a traffic problem at this park that needs to be addressed. Chris Graham expressed he would like to be involved in the sand dune mining permit review that expires later this year. Noting that surface mining is not currently being done there anymore; it appears that dredging or pumping liquid sand out of there is. Chris concluded with he wants to make things better for the park and the community; as this is a very treasured park.

Chris Crumbaugh, MSPAC Co-Chair, shared that her parents have been light keepers there for a number of years. Visitors need to be aware there is a cost to climb the lighthouse and refreshments can be purchased there. Specifically noting that additional signage is needed.

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF: Chair Klarr asked for a motion of support for approval of Resolution 02-2016-01 for the Ludington state park general management plan. The vote was carried unanimously 8-0.

2016 MICHIGAN NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND GRANT PROJECTS

Matt Lincoln gave a brief overview of the applications to be submitted to the trust fund for grant review. These were presented in no particular order.

Matt reviewed the Wilderness SP grant application; they have been redeveloping the lakeshore campground. There are about 50 campsites within the loop being renovated. The new development would include 69 sites.

Additional funding for further development of the bike route of the Iron Belle Trail (IBT); with \$300,000 to extend from Higgins Lake state park continuing north to US-27. Also, a development grant for south of Gaylord, adding 2 miles of bike trail and development of downtown trail head.

Reviewed a small grant ask of 50,000 for the Porkies and IBT; trail to go over Little Iron River to connect to Porcupine Mountains Wilderness state park and all the amenities within the park.

Grant submission to renovate the Remick Band shell at Belle Isle state park. This would bring activities back to this area. This band shell was first built in the 1920's. Due to the historical status of the band shell; it will likely be renovated.

Grant for Phase 2 of the Fred Meijer White Pine Trail for 29 miles of paving. This would complete the 92 mile stretch. **Chief Ron Olson** explained that we had planned to finish entire 40 miles last year; public input indicated they didn't want limestone. We redid the entire proposal and added bridges and will pave 10 miles and will complete the rest as we can. Chief Olson shared that there is no line drawn on the amount of money that can be requested from the trust fund.

Numerous other grant requests were briefly described for the group. Chief Olson noted that this is a preliminary look and we will need to review them further; we will report back at a later meeting on the projects that will be funded. Chief Olson also noted that gas and oil has gone down so our dollars to the endowment fund goes down. Puts stress on our internal infrastructure.

Ann Conklin suggested there was a need for emphasis on an opt out of the recreation passport to assist with finding additional funding for these projects; this would be a stable source of funding.

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF: Chair Klarr asked for a motion of support for approval of Resolution 02-2016-02 for the 2016 Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant projects. The vote was carried unanimously 8-0.

MUSKEGON SPORTS COMPLEX MASTER PLAN PRESENTATION

Jim Rudicil, Executive Director, Muskegon Sports Complex, run by Muskegon Sports Council (nonprofit) presented the proposed master plan for the sports complex. Jim spoke a little about himself and his background in the Muskegon area. They built the first successful summer luge track in North America. They also operate the archery program at the park. This attracts thousands of people across America. All proceeds are reinvested back into the facility. Mr. Rudicil shared several short videos about the sports complex and the plans for the future. The videos showed many of the recreation opportunities (ice skating, skiing, luges, ice skating trail) currently available at the complex.

All current venues are lighted, which enables them to be open from 10:00 a.m. through 10:00 p.m., weather permitting. The Muskegon Sports Complex is one of the biggest attractions in Muskegon County during the winter months. They also have many events they sponsor during the winter.

Mr. Rudicil reviewed the site plan with the committee, noting that the parking lot has never been enlarged so this has created a continual problem; they are looking to alleviate this problem with increased parking in this plan. The plan calls for an addition of another 270 parking spaces. There will be construction of a new maintenance building to share with the parks department, for snow removal equipment etc. Currently there is a small barn that is inaccessible during the winter months. The plan also includes an addition to the existing lodge, which they have outgrown. The current lodge was built in 1993. They hope to alleviate lines to restrooms with this addition as well. The complex includes a 20,000 square foot pavilion, with a roof, for the ice skating area. Existing archery ranges will stay the same. The existing maintenance building would be converted to office space and sport equipment repair workshop. They hope to install a dual mega zip line that creates accessibility to view the dunes. Hillside incline elevator to the top of the luge. Aerial foot bridges, biathlon range, emergency road access, outdoor climbing wall, canopy tour, as well as a skate trail loop addition.

Chief Ron Olson spoke briefly about the idea of showing support; we are trying to build background when this plan is presented to the community. It is helpful to show that this has support from other areas of the state and community.

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF: Chair Klarr asked for a motion of support for approval of Resolution 02-2016-03 for the Muskegon Sports Complex master plan. The vote was carried unanimously 8-0.

BELLE ISLE PUBLIC SURVEY UPDATE

Chief Ron Olson gave a brief update on the recently completed Belle Isle public survey. This survey was conducted back in August 2015, with a sample of 700 participants, a 3 county area and the City of Detroit. The survey was conducted by Morpace with a margin of error of 3%. The survey divided questions into parts; people who had been to the park in the last couple years and those who hadn't been in several years. 90% were satisfied with the management of the park, liked the direction the park was going. They also indicated they were very satisfied with the park. 80% of the respondents were Detroiters.

One of the upside to the summary was respondents indicated the most important feature was a clean and safe park. The second most valued feature was clean restrooms. This winter we are repainting restrooms. Chief Olson encouraged everyone to view the completed survey at the Belle Isle site. The survey was shared with the Belle Isle Advisory Committee at their last meeting. There have been many positive articles in the paper regarding the survey and we feel this has been a positive step.

OAKLAND COUNTY PARKS/DNR JOINT ORV SITE

Dan Stencil, Melissa Prowse, and Sue Wells, from Oakland County Parks, attended to present the collaborative effort between them and the DNR for a joint ORV site. Dan Stencil thanked everyone for the opportunity to come and present this effort. Mr. Stencil indicated he has been involved since the early 80's when the DNR first wanted to locate an ORV site in southeast Michigan. Approximately 2 years ago a couple events were held catering to jeep's and other ORV's, this event called the "Dixy Gully Run" created great support from the local area including local area governments. The Groveland Oaks campground and Holly recreation area are situated around this location.

Chief Ron Olson reviewed some of the timelines over the last couple years and how the trust fund grant application for this project was submitted in December 2014; from that a 2.9 million grant was awarded to the DNR. In 2015 a joint committee drafted a MOU and started to develop a business plan for this project. Chief Ron Olson shared that he envisions this to be a turnkey operation. There would be a fee to get into to the facility and visitors would still need ORV sticker. We see this as a self-supporting operation. There are many organizations that would like to be involved in the development of this project. This project is built on partnerships and would be the first jointly managed project by the county and state. This would be a great economic stimulator, as there are many shops that cater to these types of vehicles and sports. Mr. Olson noted he would like to see a couple signature sponsors from the industry for this project.

Jason Fleming added that offers have been made on 3 additional parcels of property that are needed to move forward with this project.

Jacklin Blodgett added that no recreation passport would be necessary for this ORV Park, an entry fee would be charged. Opening is dependent on the purchase of the additional properties. Looking towards perhaps a 2017 opening, as development is quick for an ORV area like this.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Commissioner Louise Klarr asked for any public comment and noted that the committee received a lot of great information here today.

A local man (Paul) who belongs to some of the clubs in the area, relayed that a large number of club member's would like to have additional boating access sites in the area done by the DNR. He added that the area is in need of a reasonably priced location to fish and boat, with easy access in the area.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:35 a.m.