

MINUTES

NATURAL RESOURCE COMMISSION

Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee

April 14, 2016

Demmer Shooting Sports and Education Center
4830 E. Jolly Road
Lansing, MI 48910

PRESENT FOR THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

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

PRESENT FOR THE MSPAC

Mary Pitcher
Jim Bradley
Mike McDonald
Julie Clark
Ann Conklin
Bob Hoffmeyer
Mike Foote
Brad Garmon for Chris Graham

ABSENT

Commissioner Tim Nichols, Co-Chair
Tom Bailey
Jim Hendricks
Amy Trotter

OTHERS PRESENT

DNR Management and Staff
Natalie Elkins – Marketing and Outreach
Christie Bayus - Grants

MICHIGAN STATES PARKS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (MSPAC)

OPENING COMMENTS

The meeting was called to order at 9:05 a.m. by Commissioner Louise Klarr. Commissioner Klarr welcomed everyone, and reminded them to please sign in.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Minutes were approved for the February 11, 2016 meeting. No changes were noted. Commissioner Klarr motioned for approval of the minutes with Mike McDonald seconding that motion. Motion to accept minutes as written passed unanimously.

ACTION ITEMS

FISHERMAN'S ISLAND STATE PARK GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

Debbie Jenson, Park Management Plan Administrator, presented an overview of the Fisherman's Island State Park General Management Plan. Fisherman's Island State Park is located just south of Charlevoix and has approximately 6 miles of coast line. Debbie reviewed the 2004 NRC approved boundary lines for the park. It should be noted that there are a large number of archeological and Native American sites situated within this park. Fisherman's Island is also a designated piping plover site. Little Traverse band of Odawa often utilize this site.

The recreation opportunities at Fisherman's Island State Park site are; the park is open to hunting, with fishing access on 3 trout streams. Hiking trails are present, along with rustic camping right on the shore line. Some of the challenges are with the roadway at the south end of the park. This road was once developed and has now been abandoned. At this time the road for the most part is impassable.

The plan was reviewed and approved by the Stewardship sub-committee on March 30, 2016 with minor adjustments. All information regarding the plan is viewable on the committee document library.

The DNR received much public and stakeholder input on the plan; with many responses received to the public survey. The survey found that some of the primary uses are camping, hiking, and swimming at this park. The survey also showed that many people are split on whether they would like to see changes at the park. Some would like a non-motorized trail to Traverse City. Some wanted a more modern campground. Most said no change was preferred.

Zoning proposed is simple with all developed areas at the north of the park. There is a small area of developed recreation area that has been surveyed that could be used as there are no restrictions on it. Input supports the continuation of rustic camping for this park.

There was much discussion regarding the proposed roadway, whether vehicle traffic and the potential for a nonnotarized trail would pose issues. There is an issue with the access way into the park; this access crosses private property, technically there is no legal access from the south end. We do have a process to see about an easement/purchase but to move the road is an expensive option. Trying to connect the north part of the park to the south part of the park will be a challenge. As it stands we have a route through the park under study, but the area needs to be rezoned to accomplish this.

Currently the park is comprised of a 63% primitive zone, 30% natural resource recreation, with the remainder highlighted as cultural. We are currently looking to complete phase I of the archeological survey. There is the need to do a better job of enforcing and protecting the resources in this area; due to the abundance of artifacts. We also need to educate the public on the importance of preserving this area. We are working with our regional partners to connect the park beyond the boundaries of the park with a multi-use trail. One of the main issues for the stakeholders is they would prefer not to have a bike trail going down the road and disturbing the area. Although there is a lot to work yet, resolving the ownership issue at the south end is key. Some of the long term items to address are the lack of a designated beach at this park and communication issues with radios, phones etc. that need to be improved. A septic system and water for a modest bathroom/shower there is needed for those that would want to stay longer at the park. Currently there is no running water or toilets even for staff. Fisherman's Island State Park was established in 1974, and the Lake Michigan water trail goes along there.

Commission Klarr asked about the hunting disturbance created since this park is open to hunting? If you want to hunt you would have to do so at the southern section of the park; this park is 6 miles long. There is some deer hunting there but it is very troublesome for hunters to remove game due to the very heavy forest.

Mike McDonald shared that he had recently hunted at Sleepy Hollow state park and how well they interact there. Tim Schreiner also indicated they have had very little controversy between hunters and others. Commissioner Klarr indicated she has been to Fisherman's Island state park and the park is very rustic and has met people that drive from Chicago year after year to come to this park for that reason. The campground there was developed when it was a state forest, so the campground was established before the property was a state park.

Ron shared that the difficulty with the survey split is that others would probably go there if there was showers and restrooms available for use. A small facility at the campground office would be better received by those that prefer the rustic experience.

Julie Clark thanked Debbie for working on this management plan and being willing to listen and participate with the public. She also thanked her for supporting the proposed trail connection from Traverse City to Charlevoix as part of the plan.

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF: Chair Klarr asked for a motion of support for approval of Resolution 04-2016-01 for the Fisherman's Island state park general management plan. The motion was seconded by Julie Clark and Mary Pitcher. The vote carried unanimously.

PRESENTATION: GREEN INITIATIVES TEAM GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND HISTORY

Tim Schreiner, Cadillac District Manager, and Linnea Dawson, Harbor Coordinator, shared that the Green Initiatives Team has been working together since 2004 and now have their own logo. A slide show was presented to illustrate who the group is comprised of; field staff, supervisors, stewardship, as well as a representative from the DEQ. The DEQ has been very supportive of the team. Members are added to the committee as needed; with a notice sent out for volunteers. The person is then recommended to the management team. The group prefers to have people who have passion as this is more important than position. Involving those that are passionate about green initiatives allows us to focus on our mission of green design and construction, environmentally preferred products, waste reduction, sustainability planning, energy efficiency, outreach and education.

Sustainability is described as specific actions that employees can take at work to improve environmental sustainability.

Pilots and Initiatives for the Green Team

- Annual efforts in a focused range of areas
- Team research and development
- Beg, borrow and ask don't' recreate the wheel
- Larger system wide rollout
- Controlled rollout to a small percentage of facilities in a pilot format

The team starts small and work up from there. The main focus the first several years was on the following:

- Recycling
- Green cleaners
- Product metering
- Growing now mowing
- Bio based products
- Clean marinas – list of requirements to become certified as a clean marina, program through the DEQ. All state marinas are certified clean.
- Storm water management
- Camp green program
- Green building design

Mike McDonald asked if the team has been able to pass on their knowledge to the marinas. Linnea indicated we share the information with them but we can't enforce it. We do work with approximately 60 communities via the grant-in-aid program through which we encourage them to do this.

Mission

The primary mission of the Green Initiatives Team is to work at coordinating and rolling out state initiatives. A survey in 2015 showed that 67% of the parks are doing some sort of recycling at their parks. The figure is up considerably; as there was only 8% in 2004 participating in recycling. The group looks for test parks to implement trials of new initiatives. The group is currently looking for new types of products to implement into our parks. They also look for funding sources, educational opportunities with staff as well as customers. The team is currently working with Granger for recycling bins. Today there are many more communities that offer opportunities to recycle. Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) is also piloting 6 rest stops with recycling. The Michigan Recycling Coalition is working to assist us with getting the word out there about what MDOT and the DNR are doing.

Tim also spoke about the lack of funding the last few years; Anna Sylvester clarified that some funding is available for districts. Ron further explained ways the DNR has invested in working towards being greener, by reinvesting in re-lamping, utilities etc. As time goes on those savings reoccur. There is more to be done but we continue to move forward. We try to focus on conservation of resources that we can control.

Mary Pitcher thanked the Green Initiatives Team for their presentation and told them to keep up the good work. Anna Sylvester will get the commissioners a list of green initiatives currently being worked on within the parks. It was also noted that the DNR was the public agency recipient of the Green Leader award in 2015. Ron spoke about the green initiative being developed at Belle Isle.

Brad Garmon shared this was part of the Blue Ribbon panel initiative and is meeting that programs goals.

STRATEGIC PLAN: STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, THREATS (SWOT)

Matt Lincoln, Grants Coordinator, presented the background on the updating of the strategic plan with a PowerPoint presentation. Explaining that new program and plans have been developed since the last plan was developed in 2009. The presentation shared who the team is, and why the plan is being updated. Matt also explained that a strategic plan provides guidance, focuses resources, establishes goals, measures progress and sets priorities.

This review process started in January and they are looking to complete it by years end. This committee reviewed the existing plan as well as reviewing the other plans that have been developed over the last few years. The current plan is a 10 year timeframe, looking for the new plan to focus on a 5 year time frame. The team is currently reaching out to stakeholders, advisory committees, and holding regional meetings to gather input. The group will analyze the data for developing our goals and objectives in order to draft a plan that we will continue to use and measure against.

The second portion of the exercise was presented by Debbie Jensen. Commissioners were asked to comment on each of 4 items. Those items were the DNR PRD's strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities. Items are listed below according to group.

Strengths: Knowledgeable staff, keep up with trends and natural resource management, willingness to listen to communities, DNR has a tremendous amount of useful data, seen as a national leader, we have 103 incredible state parks, incredible network of trails, willingness to collaborate with other agencies, groups, public and nonprofits, seen as solution oriented, strong leadership, advisory committees input, seek out groups for friends groups for our parks. Lots of communication that comes out from us, marketing program is growing, range of recreational experiences that are offered, increasingly diverse in both staff and park locations. Strong focus on customer service. Stewardship with getting volunteers "work bees".

Weaknesses: Our web page is hard to find stuff, tendency to get bogged down in the weeds or bureaucracy, lack of fiscal resources, management structure and organization structure not well understood, decision process slows, need to shorten process to empower leadership, communication and timing, DNR often seen as regulatory agency – more of the perception of who we are. Try to be all things to all people. Public perception of responsibility, they don't understand who to talk to and the depth of the organization. Ageing infrastructure, sometimes with the state there is a statewide model of "we've always done it this way" institutional traditions, collection and management of data.

Threats: Pressure to have less public lands, funding, public perception of government agencies, trends of the internet age can be a threat, pressure to operate more and more like a business, demand for transparency, extreme amount of data to get to the public, more global issues that threaten the state, demand on the public facilities and lands and the multiuse of these lands, coordination of shared use, popular parks and overuse of specific parks....too crowded. Capacity is a user experience issue, ageing infrastructure threat. Surrounding land use creates capacity issues. Invasive species and unfunded mandates

Opportunities: To use the blue ribbon panel report as a guide, to be more connected through applications and devices, more collaboration in building on the system, opt out is an opportunity, marketing plan for our unique resources how we are different than others. Urban initiative as well involvement of smaller communities creates excitement. Public misperception, friends groups – mature them into supporting all our resources, website for parks should have link to friends groups, there is general public support for parks and recreation, internal partnership with forestry division, Youth conservation groups involved, build diverse future

interest and workforce (youth outreach), user fees, partners more closely with healthcare, colleges and universities, insurance companies to help promote more healthy lifestyles, private partnerships

INFORMATIONAL BUSINESS

Park Endowment Fund: Jackie Blodgett updated us with good news regarding the park endowment fund. Handouts were distributed outlining the fund, a slideshow was also presented. Since our meeting in March, financial information has changed. Revenues were down for 2016 due to gas and fuel prices and looks like this will continue to decline. Projected deficient is about 1.0 million; alternative investments are doing better than they hoped. 47 million is appropriated this year, planning on 38 million in revenue coming in. 8 million in park endowment reserves, leaves us with a 1 million dollar deficient. Will have a better idea by June of what revenues are coming in, hopefully more revenue than we think will be available. If not there is 9.3 million in park improvement funds, we could transfer over the 1million from there, and passport dollars could also be used as well. We have capital outlay of 2 million set aside. We are moving ahead on some capital projects as the anticipated deficient is down. Future years projected revenue is 38 million and expected to remain flat, expenditures continue to climb. None of this addresses the 300 million in infrastructure needs.

Finance Workgroup update:

Ann Conklin suggested developing from the subcommittee for ways to keep from utilizing park endowment fund money for operational costs each year. The operational dollars required continues to increase. Ann also suggested developing a spreadsheet or chart that shows the impact of this over the last several years. Brad Garmon noted this is the risk of relaying on a fluctuating fund like the revenue that goes into the park endowment fund. Julie Clark requested she be added to the finance workgroup. Ron Olson also indicated that Chuck Nelson would be happy to assist with working on the finance issue.

Trails Update:

Paul Yauk, Chief Trails Coordinator, shared a new marketing tool (brochure) with the commissioners showing highlighting our campgrounds and pathways. The brochure was developed by Anna Sylvester and Amy Swainstein. We currently have about 35,000 copies on hand. Ann Conklin's group, mParks, would like a box sent to them for distribution.

Snowmobile season was over April 1st, permits were down 7% this year. That is the equivalent of about 10,000 permits. At this time there is no snowmobile trail program. There is a need to get permanent easements for snowmobile trails. We are currently working on a pilot GPS project which will give us a wealth of information. The ORV program had a fee increase and that increase is scheduled to sunset in 2018. There will be additional information coming on what we've accomplished with those monies and what we will do going forward if we continue with this fee. We are working with staff around the state on a public statement regarding this.

Louise Klarr reminded everyone of the phone workshop and the next meeting. Mike McDonald thanked Renee Parker for getting meeting materials out to the committee promptly.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:52 a.m.