

MINUTES

NATURAL RESOURCE COMMISSION

Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee

June 14, 2018

9:00 – 11:00 a.m.

Lansing Community College
Health and Human Services Department - Room HHS 025-026
515 S. Washington Square
Lansing, MI 48933

PRESENT FOR THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

Commissioner Louise Klarr, Chair

Commissioner Christine Crumbaugh, Chair, NRC

PRESENT FOR THE MSPAC

Ann Conklin

Chris Tracy

Bob Hoffmeyer

Chuck Hoover

Jim Bradley

Tom Bailey

Julie Clark

Ron Olson – DNR Representative

ABSENT

Jefferson Gray

Mary Pitcher

Jim Hendricks

Mike McDonald

Mike Foote

Chris Graham

OTHERS PRESENT

Jacklin Blodgett

Vicki McGhee

Jason Fleming

DNR Management and Staff

MICHIGAN STATES PARKS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (MSPAC)

OPENING COMMENTS

The meeting was called to order at 9:12 a.m. by **Commissioner Klarr**. Commissioner Klarr welcomed everyone to today's meeting. Committee member introductions were made around the panel.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Minutes were approved for the April 12, 2018 meeting. Commissioner Klarr motioned for approval of the minutes with Committee member **Chris Tracy** and **Ann Conklin** seconding that motion. Motion to accept minutes passed unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT

George Lindquist, Vice President, Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC) spoke stating he wants to see the Parks and Recreation Division work better with Wildlife staff. Spoke about lands within the parks that were purchased with game funds and some have yarding complex for deer. **Lindquist** feels this is a great opportunity to partner to get something done. This is an opportunity and we should be working together to get some things done.

Committee member addressed Mr. Lindquist stating that the Porkies is part of part of the Wilderness Act (designated as) so it's not that they aren't working together but that restrictions do apply. Mr. Lindquist stated that they want something done for wildlife and habitat in that area.

Greg Peter, Executive Board of the MUCC also spoke stating that the Parks and Wildlife division have worked together on smaller projects. That the Parks Division and Wildlife have one thing in common and that is the continued need for customers, so it is incumbent upon everyone in parks to find common cause.

ACTION ITEMS

Belle Isle Park Strategic Management Plan

Ron Olson opened with background on the Belle Isle Strategic Management Plan. The plan was developed over the last year with our partners from the Belle Isle Conservancy (BIC), Deb Jensen has been the lead planner for the DNR team. **Olson** introduced **Michele Hodges**, Chair, Belle Isle Conservancy (BIC), who is present for today's meeting.

Deb Jensen, PRD Planner, briefly reviewed the plan content which includes: core values, guiding resources, goals, objectives and our accomplishments over the last 3 years.

The plan guides our strategic direction for the next 10 years, purpose and significance of the park, as well as outlines our 10-year goals. The plan further addresses our 20-year management zones plan, which defines resource protection, development and park use.

Various methods were used to gather public input on the plan. There were two stakeholder and public input sessions held, with 149 in attendance. An online questionnaire generated over 1,500 responses. Some of the things the public like most about Belle Isle Park are the beauty, nature, location, biking, fountain, conservatory and the aquarium.

Top priorities for future changes are more food options, protect natural resources, signage improvements, facility infrastructure, welcome center, and development of a sustainable financial model.

Olson spoke about the Ouolof garden project and the partnership with the garden club. **Committee Member Tom Bailey** stated he appreciates the effort on the Belle Isle garden. Commissioners all shared positive feedback and feelings about the island; commissioners expressed concern on how funding these improvements would be accomplished.

Olson stated that Belle Isle Park is the only park that has “general fund” funding. The DNR is currently collaborating with BIC and the Wilson Foundation for grant assistance on the restoration of the Conservancy. **Olson** also shared that the “Grand Premiere” held each year prior to the race raised \$1.1 million towards the operation of the conservancy. Some funding will be utilized for the Scott Fountain. The Scott Fountain was built in 1919 and has many needed repairs at this time. Philanthropic efforts are important to future of Belle Isle.

Michele Hodges, Chair, Belle Isle Conservancy (BIC), spoke briefly about the great partnerships established and thanked Deb Jensen for her work on the plan. Michele further stated that we have many challenges coming up and lots to do without comprising our mission. **Chair Klarr** encouraged all to attend a BIPAC meeting sometime. Very passionate people that attend.

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF: **Committee Member Chris Tracy** asked for a motion of support for approval of Resolution No: 06-2018-04. The motion was seconded by **Committee Member Julie Clark**. Resolution No. 06-2018-04 was approved unanimously.

Land Use Order of the Director – Rail Trails

This LUOD will be coming forward soon addressing rail trails declared as recreation corridors, giving us the ability to use state park funds to maintain.

Land Use Order of the Director – Wildlife Conservation Order – Highland Field Dog Trial

This LUOD will also be coming forward in July 2018, to the NRC for information and then action in August 2018.

PRESENTATION

Oakland County ORV – Status of Planning Process

Jason Fleming, Resource Protection and Promotion Chief, and **Gerald Fisher**, **Oakland County Parks and Recreation Commission**, shared with the committee a partnership between the two agencies to create an ORV park in southeast Michigan. The current location is near Mt. Holly in Oakland County. A draft operating agreement with the state is being finalized and is in the process of awarding a bid for design and development of the park. There is a planned opened for 2019.

Jason Fleming shared a conceptual map of the 115-acre facility, sharing that land for this project was purchased through a Natural Resources Trust Fund grant. Currently looking for key partnerships for a self-sustaining facility. An ORV sticker, recreation passport and a fee will be required for entrance to the facility.

Belle Isle Park 2017 Annual Report

Ron Olson shared the Belle Isle Park 2017 Annual Report; this report was presented to the Detroit City Council in May; a yearly requirement per the lease with the City. The DNR entered into a 30-year lease agreement with the City of Detroit for Belle Isle Park. The lease further provides for 2, 15-year renewals. The lease was adopted in February 2014.

The initial goals for Belle Isle Park was to provide a clean, safe, customer-oriented, park; to grow partnerships and alliances and to be the stewards of Belle Isle's resources. The DNR's responsibility is to manage the park with our partners which include Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) for roads and bridges, DNR-Law Enforcement Division, Michigan State Police and U.S. Border Patrol for public safety. The rules being enforced for the island are the same as for the City of Detroit. Law enforcement for the island reported no incidents for 2017.

Numerous events are held on the island each year offering opportunities to connect with the local community. One large event held is the Metro Detroit Youth Day. This event has been on the island since 1981 and assists urban youth gain employment opportunities and training. The Summer Youth Employment Program also has been held on the island the last 6-7 years. This program was tailored to high need areas such as Flint, Saginaw, Pontiac and Detroit to partner with groups to assist youth with summer employment.

Visitation to Belle Isle Park has continued to increase with 4.2 million visitors in 2017. Belle Isle is the most heavily visited state park in the U.S.

Committee member, Chris Tracy spoke about the resources needed to sustain the park and that the state does not own it. Feels at some point the city should start picking up some of the share of the costs. It should be noted that the philanthropic community has started to pick up and start to put money back into the city, including Belle Isle Park.

INFORMATION ONLY

Bay City State Park General Management Plan Phase 2 Update (w) memo included in committee members packet.

GENERAL UPDATES

Chief Updates(v)

Anna Mooney, Legislative Liaison for the DNR updated the committee on SJRO. The intent of the legislation is to commit royalties to local public recreation. The legislation would amend state law and the Michigan Constitution through a ballot proposal. Administration supports the legislation. This is not intended to fix long term infrastructure issues but to help local communities. Discussions regarding the proposal are ongoing.

Public Act 288 – Road Inventory

Ron Olson spoke about the forest road inventory being done in the Upper Peninsula and Southern Lower Peninsula to bring us into compliance with Public Act 288. A memo outlining the plan was included in members packet.

Memorial Day Occupancy and Camping Cancellation (w)

Ron Olson shared holiday weekend occupancy status; camp reservations are up 3% over last year currently. During this same time frame, net nights reserved are about equal to last year. The new campground cancelation/modification policy appears to be working. The policy was developed to discourage customers from reserving many sites/days and cancelling some at the last minute.

Jason Fleming, Resource Protection and Promotion Chief, provided a written update on the policy. Revenues are up in camping and lodging. Many parks are pushing the storage of campers and RV's at designated parks.

Wastewater Education Update (v)

Brittany Ruff, Development Planner, reviewed the issue of failing drain fields and wastewater education. This material was included in committee members packets. Ruff further covered the current issues and proactive steps we are taking to address them. Planning is currently working to develop an educational campaign to educate the public; due to recent infrastructure failures at Holly State Park. Parks and Recreation is taking a proactive approach to address problems at various locations. Some of that includes testing and treating drainage systems, conducting studies and educating people on the specific nutrients that are especially harmful to our systems and drain fields. A social media campaign was conducted over the memorial weekend and will be done again on the July 4th holiday. Additional signage will be developed regarding this problem.

Goal is to get the message out to all parks with sanitation stations. We will be working with RV associations, MARVAC etc. to get the message out.

DNR Training Update (w)

A current training update for the PRD Ranger Academy was included in committee members packets. Recent Ranger training included 19 students from across the state, that completed a four-week training program. Customer service, communications skills, maintenance and construction skills were some of the job-related topics covered.

OTHER

Ron Olson introduced **Michael Desnoyer**, new Section Chief for the Parks and Recreation, Administrative Services Section. Michael has accepted the position that Jacklin Blodgett formerly held.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 11:26 a.m.