

MINUTES

NATURAL RESOURCE COMMISSION

Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee

August 17, 2017

Jackson Community College
W.J. Maher Campus
3000 Blake Rd.
Jackson, MI 49201

PRESENT FOR THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

Commissioner Louise Klarr, Chair
Commissioner Chris Tracy, Co-Chair

PRESENT FOR THE MSPAC

Julie Clark
Ann Conklin
Bob Hoffmeyer
Mike McDonald
Chuck Hoover
Chris Graham

ABSENT

Commissioner Christine Crumbaugh, Co-Chair
Jim Bradley
Tom Bailey
Mike Foote
Jefferson Gray
Jim Hendricks
Mary Pitcher

OTHERS PRESENT

Ron Olson
Vicki McGhee
Debbie Jensen
Gary Jones
Murdock Jemerson
DNR Management and Staff

MICHIGAN STATES PARKS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (MSPAC)

OPENING COMMENTS

The meeting was called to order at 8:06 a.m. by **Commissioner Louise Klarr**. Commissioner Klarr welcomed everyone and introduced committee members to those in attendance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Minutes were approved for the June 8, 2017 meeting. **Commissioner Klarr** motioned for approval of the minutes with Mike McDonald and Ann Conklin seconding that motion. Motion to accept minutes passed unanimously.

UPCOMING

The next committee workshop is scheduled for September 15, 2017, from 2:00 – 3:30 p.m.

There will be a PRD Green Initiative Team Presentation at the October, 2017 MSPAC meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jim De Clerek spoke about the Bay City Recreation Area stating that the Tobico Marsh was originally purchased with Pittman Robinson money; stating he hears the situation is not unusual around the state and the DNR needs a plan in place to fix the problem.

Ron Olson, PRD Chief, spoke about current research being done and the origin of the land and how the DNR staff are currently reviewing original documents so we are knowledgeable about the property situation.

ACTION ITEMS

Muskegon State Park General Management Plan:

Deb Jensen, DNR Parks Management Plan Administrator, reviewed details of the Muskegon State Park General Management Plan. The plan has the support of the MSPAC Stewardship subcommittee who reviewed the plan on July 26, 2017. This park was established in 1923 and sees approximately 900,000 visitors per year. This park is unique as it has the Winter Sports Complex, which is the only public luge facility in the state. The park offers many winter sports opportunities such as sledding, ice skating and cross country skiing, as well as two campgrounds with some year around camping. As one of the older parks in Michigan there is a long standing lumber history here. Plans for the park include the expansion of the Winter Sports Complex, expansion of transportation connections to the local area, additional educational opportunities, as well as replacement of bathroom facilities and a new playground.

Ron Olson, PRD Chief, spoke briefly about a pending trust fund grant for this park; and how eager the county and community are to invest in the park they see as a real asset to the area.

Upon completion of the presentation a resolution of support from the subcommittee held previously was presented

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF: **Commissioner Louise Klarr** asked for a motion of support for approval of Resolution No: 08-2017-08. The motion was seconded by **Committee Member Mike McDonald**. The Stewardship subcommittee has previously recommended approval at a meeting held on July 26, 2017. Resolution No. 08-2017-08 was approved unanimously.

GENERAL UPDATES

Bay City Recreation Area (v)

Ron Olson, PRD Chief, spoke about the continued work to be done regarding the re-designation of Bay City Recreation Area to Bay City State Park. Parks and Recreation is working closely with Wildlife to find a compromise to resolve the issues. The groups are currently reviewing ideas and suggestions brought forth at a recent public meeting.

Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (v)

Marc Miller, Regional Initiatives Deputy, shared a presentation regarding the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, also known as SCORP. This plan is a requirement in order for Michigan to have access to federal land and water conservation fund grants. This plan must be completed by the department every five years, and is due by the end of this year. Marc stated that Michigan has received approximately \$130 million from this fund.

There have been a number of internal reviews of the plan with the executive team; this assisted with incorporating division plans and objectives into the overall plan. There was a very active engagement with public officials, park districts as well as a telephone survey conducted.

Mark also noted that two MSPAC members, Chuck Hoover and Ann Conklin, currently sit on this advisory group. Ann shared how members are pleased to participate in the survey. A number of survey results were shared with the committee via the presentation.

Budget Update (v)

Ron Olson, PRD Chief, reported on the FY2018 budget recently signed by the governor. The FY2018 budget goes into effect October 1, 2017. After much work at the legislative level, the budget included \$7 million in general fund money for state park infrastructure investment. This is the largest general fund investment on infrastructure since 2004.

Highland Recreation Area Phase 2 GMP (v)

Deb Jensen, DNR Parks Management Plan Administrator, briefly reviewed the Highland Recreation Area Phase 2 plan. Preparation of this plan was led by Matt Lincoln and can be reviewed by members in the MSPAC document library. Debbie also noted that the Phase 1 plan was completed in 2011. There are some interesting features from the Edsel Ford era at this recreation area; **Committee member Chris Graham** shared some interesting history regarding the parks back story with the members. The plan is complete and posted to the website.

Camping Fee Update (v)

Ron Olson, PRD Chief, spoke about the upcoming approval of the new lodging and camping fees. Fees for cancellations and modifications to reservations will be modified as well. Committee members and staff have been working on this for some time. The fee adjustments would be effective November 1 before the onset of the 2018 season. The new fee recommendation has received support from members of the public as well.

Rose lake and Plainwell District Highlights (v)

Murdock Jemerson, Rose Lake District Supervisor, presented some highlights of the Rose Lake District; this district consists of 16 parks. The newest park is Watkins Lake State Park. Several parks in the Rose Lake district have recently acquired a Jump Island aquatic play area. The aquatic play area has been very successful, adding an additional \$10,000 in revenue. This addition has had a significant impact on visitor attendance to these parks. Murdock spoke about the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) and how youth with this program are assisting in restoring 5 cabins at the Mill Lake Outdoor Center. The SYEP works with urban youth agencies to provide training and work for young adults. These agencies and youth provide a great service; get relevant training and get a lot of work done.

Ron Olson, PRD Chief, shared a story about the work done on Belle Isle with kids from the SYEP. They renovated a bathroom and did all the work replacing plumbing, flooring etc. The goal is to try to teach job skills to kids as well as get them interested in what we do. Some of these former students have been hired into positions within the DNR and others have gone on to college and great careers.

Gary Jones, Plainwell District Supervisor, and former Manager of the Waterloo Recreation Area. Gary spoke about the mountain bike trails and Waterloo and how they greatly increased the attendance at that park. The Plainwell district consists of 9 parks in southwestern Michigan; along the Lake Michigan shoreline and some of the busiest in the state. Also known as the “gold coast” they are high use and high revenue parks. Gary shared some of the recent improvements; there are now bike rentals at VanBuren State Park, Warren Dunes State Park has a new bath house and is one of the top pet friendly beaches in the US. Warren Dunes SP has 2 miles of pet friendly beach area. Holland State Park has recently replaced roofs on beach buildings; metal roofing was utilized for these replacements.

Grand Haven State Park has seen a lot of activity this summer; with high lake levels dune grass has been washing ashore. Dune grass removal is a labor intensive job; staff is working hard trying to keep up on removal. Gary also thanked Law Enforcement for their assistance during peak times such as Coast Guard Festival and holiday weekends.

Ron Olson, PRD Chief, spoke about the low water level a few years ago and the dynamic of the water level coming back up and how the dune grass ends up on the beaches. There were truckloads to remove all along the coast line.

Commissioner Chris Tracy spoke highly of the staff and volunteers at Fort Custer and how they worked hard cleaning up after the recent storms. He frequently rides there and Yankee Springs.

Ron Olson, PRD Chief, shared a snapshot of the camper and lodging survey information with the committee. 90% of campers rate their experience as good or very good. 92% of our guests would recommend our campgrounds to a friend.

Ann Conklin shared that mParks hosted a national meeting in Detroit on July 24, 2017. The meeting was held on Belle Isle; the conference turned out great, Ann thanked the DNR and staff for their help.

OTHER

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 9:52 a.m.