

**MINUTES**  
**NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION MEETING**  
**May 14, 2020**  
**Conference Call/Online Meeting**

**Present for the Natural Resources Commission**

David Nyberg, Vice-Chair  
Keith Creagh  
Chris Tracy  
Louise Klarr

**Present for Department Staff**

Dan Eichinger, DNR director  
Dan Bock, legal counsel, Office of the Attorney General  
Brooke Parmalee, DNR legal and legislative affairs office  
Pam Vance, recorder

The Michigan Natural Resources Commission (NRC) met in an online conference format today. **Director Dan Eichinger** welcomed everyone to the meeting at 9:01 a.m. The **Director** specified that **David Nyberg** was appointed Vice-Chair at the April 16, 2020, meeting, and would again serve as acting chair for today's meeting.

**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

**Director's Report**

The **Director** turned the meeting over to **Fisheries Chief Jim Dexter**.

**Fisheries Division Update**

**Dexter** noted they have nine Fisheries Orders currently under review. Public input on proposals has been challenging due to the coronavirus crisis this year. Due to limited interaction and opportunity for public input, two orders are being deferred until 2021. Those orders are FO 200 Trout and Salmon and FO 206 Special Regulations for Warmwater Species.

**Heather Hettinger**, Fisheries biologist from Traverse City, gave a presentation on the development of the Elk River/Antrim Chain of Lakes muskellunge regulations. After consultation with the public, a Torch River 2021 regulation change was proposed for a spawning closure to protect spawning muskies. Torch River would remain a Type 4 stream, with a spawning closure from May 1 to June 15. The change is currently open for public comment.

**Cory Kovacs**, Fisheries biologist from Newberry, provided a summary of results of the 2019 Online Musky Angler Survey. More than 500 respondents participated in the survey online. Some of the resulting highlights included: 514 fishing trips reported; 2,494.5 total reported angler hours; on average, an angler made 7.9 trips; average angler trip was 4.8 hours; catch rate was 0.09 fish per hour; a total of 231 musky were caught; on average, anglers caught 0.45 fish per trip, with anglers taking more than two trips to catch at least one musky.

### **Wildlife Division Update**

**Acting Wildlife Chief Dan Kennedy** told the commission there has been a 33 percent increase in spring turkey hunting license sales this year. Due to increased online license sales by hunters, the DNR was unable to guarantee that hunters would receive their kill tags in time for the turkey season. Customers were e-mailed temporary kill tags that they could use until their original e-license mail tags arrived in the mail. **Kennedy** thanked Wildlife staff and the Marketing and Outreach division for their leadership and valuable work. There will be a question or two in this year's hunter survey to try to determine the reasons for the increase in sales. **Kennedy** stated that the 2019 Deer Harvest Survey results will be ready next week and presented at the June NRC meeting.

**Chad Stewart**, the DNR's deer, elk, and moose program leader, and **Ashley Autenrieth**, DNR deer program biologist, discussed white-tailed deer regulations before the commission for information only this month. These changes have been specifically developed to simplify regulations and increase opportunities for hunters. These proposed changes will be eligible for action at the June NRC meeting.

**Chief Gary Hagler**, Law Enforcement Division, provided a summary of 2019 baiting ban enforcement actions from September 22, 2019 through February 1, 2020. The department received 972 complaints, issued 323 warnings, and 338 tickets. These statistics reflect an increase of 450 complaints over the same time frame the previous year, accompanied by an increase of 149 warnings and a decrease of 8 tickets. **Hagler** said officers continue to encounter resistance from private landowners on compliance with the baiting ban. Public land hunters are following the regulations. Courts and prosecutors vary in their support of the ban.

The **Director** acknowledged and thanked **John Walters** for his work on the NRC, and mentioned he looks forward to his returning to Michigan in a couple years after his retirement.

**Vice-Chair Nyberg** declared a five-minute break at 11:31 a.m. and indicated the meeting would resume at 11:36 a.m.

### **PUBLIC APPEARANCES BEFORE THE NRC**

(**Brooke Parmalee** read the official timekeeping procedures and guidelines for the meeting's public appearances which began at 11:36 a.m.)

**Ian Fitzgerald**, Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC), commented that he would like to see members be able to remove the hunter orange from their blinds before leaving the woods each day; and also noted that members are concerned about the taking of antlerless deer in the Upper Peninsula.

**Amy Trotter**, MUCC Executive Director, thinks the DNR needs to share consistent data by Deer Management Unit when they make deer regulation proposals, not just harvest data but also information on special licenses, vehicle collisions, and chronic diseases.

**Millard Holton**, from Mason, offered support for Wildlife Conservation Order (WCO) Amendment No. 5 on Small Game and questioned whether WCO Amendment No. 6 states that hunting from raised platforms is forbidden.

**Erik Schnelle**, Quality Deer Management Association (QDMA), remarked QDMA is very pleased with the proposed deer regulations; nevertheless, they would like the carcass disposal regulations to be revisited to include any county that has CWD identified.

**Paul Sikkenga**, life-long hunter, would like to see the ban on baiting in Michigan removed and a mentor license instated for all ages to increase hunting popularity.

**Dee Frelander**, Attorneys for Animals, believes the DNR should recognize May 15 as "Endangered Species Day" in Michigan in 2021.

**Vice-Chair Nyberg** adjourned the public appearances portion of the meeting at 12:11 p.m. and called to order the regular meeting of the commission at 12:12 p.m. Nyberg noted that all commissioners who were present at the Committee of the Whole were present for the regular meeting.

### **REGULAR MEETING OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION**

#### **NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION – FOR INFORMATION ONLY**

#### **Deer Regulations Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 6 of 2020**

#### **NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION – ACTION**

#### **Approval of Minutes, April 16, 2020, Natural Resources Commission Meeting**

**Commissioner Creagh** made a motion to approve the minutes from the April 16, 2020, NRC meeting. **Commissioner Klarr** seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

#### **Small Game and Upland Game Bird Regulations Wildlife Conversation Order Amendment No. 5 of 2020**

**Nyberg** asked for a motion to approve WCO Amendment No. 5 of 2020. **Klarr** made a motion for approval, seconded by **Creagh**. **Nyberg** asked for discussion. **Creagh** moved to amend WCO Amendment No. 5 to add raccoon and opossum to the species allowed to be hunted from an elevated platform using all lawful methods of take in the day or at night. **Tracy** seconded, and there was no additional discussion. **Nyberg** called for a roll call vote for the order to modify WCO Amendment No 5 of 2020. **Commissioners Klarr, Creagh, Tracy, and Nyberg** all voted yes. **Vice-Chair Nyberg** called for additional business for WCO Amendment No. 5 of 2020. There were no further comments. **Nyberg** moved on to a roll call vote on the order as amended. **Klarr, Creagh, Tracy, and Nyberg** unanimously voted to approve Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 5 of 2020; and it passed as amended.

#### **DIRECTOR – FOR INFORMATION ONLY**

**Vice-Chair Nyberg** asked **Director Eichinger** to speak about a letter of authorization to eliminate the discounted antlerless licenses on private land that are expiring in November in the Lower Peninsula. The **Director** discussed this recommendation and said it would remove the expiring antlerless deer licenses that were issued experimentally in the past.

## DIRECTOR - ACTION

**Director Eichinger** approved extension of the season for licensed shooting preserves which normally closes April 30 to August 14, 2020. The affected game birds were raised on licensed shooting preserves, so no biological impacts to wild game birds is expected.

The **Director** also approved five land transactions.

### Commissioner Reports

**Commissioner Creagh** has been doing some turkey hunting around his house and enjoying nature. **Creagh** requested information be presented at the next NRC meeting on the impact of the COVID regulations and potential budget implications on department activities.

**Commissioner Klarr** has been out turkey hunting, and her son got a turkey. **Klarr** thanked the **Director** for moving forward on the action items.

**Commissioner Tracy** thanked all the people, the DNR, and the partners responsible for putting the online NRC meeting together again. He also thanked the department and the public for staying engaged.

**Vice-Chair Nyberg** noted there has been a 30 percent increase in the 17-24 age group of anglers getting out to fish. **Nyberg** is going to miss **Commissioner Walters** and his excellent work with the commission. He commented that outdoor recreation will be a big part of the **Governor's** "Stay Home, Stay Safe" mandate and thanked Brad Garmon for his work on outdoor recreation.

### Next Meeting

The next regular meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, June 11, 2020**, using the online format.

### Adjournment

**Vice-Chair Nyberg** asked for a motion for adjournment. **Commissioner Creagh** made a motion to adjourn, and it was seconded by **Commissioner Klarr**.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:25 p.m. Eastern Time.



David Nyberg, Vice-Chair (Acting Chair)



Daniel Eichinger, Director

DATE: June 11, 2020