

MINUTES

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee

Thursday, June 13, 2019

8:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.

Detroit Zoological Society

Ford Education Center, 8450 W. 10 Mile Road, Royal Oak

PRESENT FOR THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

Commissioner Louise Klarr, Chair

Commissioner David Nyberg

PRESENT FOR THE MSPAC

Jim Bradley (via conference)

Julie Clark

Ann Conklin

Bob Hoffmeyer

Chuck Hoover

Mike McDonald

Mary Pitcher

Ron Olson – DNR-PRD Representative

ABSENT

Chris Tracy

Chris Graham

Tom Bailey

Mike Foote

Jefferson Gray

OTHERS PRESENT

PRD Staff:

Paul Yauk

Jason Fleming

Barbara Graves

MICHIGAN STATE PARKS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (MSPAC)

OPENING COMMENTS

The meeting was called to order at 8:06 a.m. by *Commissioner Klarr*. Commissioner Klarr welcomed everyone and committee member introductions were made around the panel.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Klarr motioned for approval of the April 11, 2019 meeting minutes with *Committee member Mike McDonald* seconding that motion. Motion to accept minutes passed unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The following individuals spoke of their concerns about the Chevrolet Detroit Grand Prix held at Belle Isle State Park:

Angela Lugo-Thomas stated that she is not against the Grand Prix event but is opposed to the Grand Prix being held in a historic public park. She has attended meeting after meeting and is concerned that hers and other's comments have fallen on deaf ears. Allowing Belle Isle to be turned into a racetrack is destroying the natural setting.

Angela Disante stated that she is a psychiatric nurse practitioner who treats people suffering from a variety of mental illnesses. She said she always prescribes exercise for her patients, and many of them cannot afford a gym membership, and Belle Isle is one of the few places in the city of Detroit where people can bicycle, walk, run, hike or swim safely. However, the Grand Prix race renders the island barely usable for most of the spring. She stated that the race does not benefit the people of Detroit in any way and that it harms them, and she asks the department to not renew the contract.

Carol Rhoades stated that she is a RN and worked many years at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit. She said the Detroit Grand Prix is a danger to hearing in young children and babies at the race, and that the DNR is responsible for possible damage to hearing in these children because the race contract was renewed last year. She was concerned of the high decibel levels, not only affecting children's hearing loss, but disruption to the hundreds of swallows that nest on Sunset Point, the threatened snakes and turtles in Lake Tacoma, and the bald eagle's nest. She asks that the contract for this race is not renewed.

Michael Betzold stated that he rides his recumbent bike to Belle Isle every morning that he can, and that the ride is essential for his physical and mental health. However, the spring is infuriating and traumatic. There was no independent third-party environmental impact study of

the race as was requested by the Audubon, the Sierra Club, and other environmental groups as well as many civic leaders. He states that the DNR's official assessments are all irrelevant to the DNR mission of stewardship of the natural resources. He states that the MSPAC must oppose any extension of the Belle Isle Grand Prix contract beyond 2021 and oppose any future use of Belle Isle by the Detroit Auto Show. He says there are plenty of other private partners that can help the DNR maintain and enhance Belle Isle without demanding control over a third of it for most of the spring.

GENERAL UPDATES

Joint DNR/Oakland County Parks and Recreation ORV Committee Update

Chief Ron Olson; Jason Fleming, PRD; and Oakland County Commissioner Gerry Fisher presented an update on the partnership between the Oakland County Parks and Recreation Division and the DNR for the Holly Oaks ORV Park. The operating agreement reflects collaboration on planning, budgets and operations. The presentation was a follow-up from the June 2018 committee meeting. They are evaluating the possibility of opening the park's first 113 acres in summer 2020. DNR staff are working on a lease between Mount Holly, owners of the property to the north, to utilize their facilities for parking and access to the new park. Rowe Engineering is handling park planning and has used several closed events to assess design concepts of the park. Also shared was a compilation video detailing some of these events.

Chief Updates

Chief Ron Olson updated the committee on the high water issues along Lake Huron, with a number of BASs, camp sites, and parking lots under water. High water in the Detroit River has also created difficulties. Lake levels are at their highest since 1986.

Passports are up 5.5% overall. The passports sold in parks decreased by 21%, with more people buying from the Secretary of State, which was the original intent.

Dakota Hewlett, Iron Belle Trail Coordinator, received the National Vanguard Award from the North Country Trail Association.

Chief Olson also gave an update on development of the Oudolf Garden Detroit project on Belle Isle. It is a creation of famed Dutch designer Piet Oudolf, who envisioned an intricately designed garden built with thousands of local flowers at the Detroit island park. Project partners gathered for a June 11 groundbreaking, and the garden is set to open in fall 2020 in front of the Nancy Brown Peace Carillon Tower. The project to date has been funded with private donations or grants, like those from the Knight Arts Challenge and the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation.

MSPAC Finance Subcommittee Update

Ann Conklin, reported that the MSPAC finance subcommittee met May 13 and June 11 to review current and historical state parks data, including Recreation Passport funding and participation, limited General Fund support, and other restricted sources of revenues and their intended purposes. The committee discussed methods of surveying visitors about their knowledge of the state parks system, as well as how best to educate and inform constituents about the system. The committee also looked at infrastructure needs, prioritization of funding (and associated return on investment of those funding decisions), closing the gap between needs and available resources, and other state funding models.

MSPAC Stewardship Update

Jason Fleming, PRD, shared that the MSPAC stewardship subcommittee met May 22 to discuss the upcoming management planning process, specifically a new online public comment option to gather additional feedback from stakeholders who do not use/visit state parks. *Ray Fahlsing*, DNR parks and recreation stewardship manager, presented a year-end activity review that included an update on surveying and treatment around hemlock woolly adelgid – an invasive insect species that preys on hemlock trees – at nine state parks along Lake Michigan. This effort is in conjunction with department and CISMA efforts in the Lower Peninsula to identify and control this forest pest.

Chief Olson said they have been working on the Aquatic Invasive Species effort, along with other entities EGLE and MLSA. You will be seeing a lot of proactive activities going on; among them, the new Clean Drain Dry campaign, among other efforts. Jason Fleming adding there are crews from the Michigan Civilian Conservation Corps that will go out and collect data at sites, another extension of these efforts.

The next MSPAC meeting is August 8 at the MSU Veterinary Diagnostic Center. The start time is to be determined.

The meeting adjourned at 9:28 a.m.