

UPSA Quarterly Meeting September 25th, 2021

Members Present

Dave Johnson - UPSA President, Stuart Boren – United Sportsmen’s Club, Gary Gorniak – Straits Area Sportsmen’s Club, Mark Zychouski– William Anderson Sportsmen’s club, Mark Schoen - William Anderson Sportsmen’s Club, Norm Balko - UP Whitetails Alger County, Floyd Dropps - UP Inland Walleye Council, Lyle Gearhart – Menominee County Pheasant Club, Casey Hoffman – caseyhoffman4state rep, Wes Hoffman - Hoffman Law, Bob Doepker – UPSA Wildlife Resource person & Ret. DNR Wildlife Biologist, Geno Venditti – Wildlife Unlimited of Dickinson County, Stephen King – Straits Area Sportsmen Club, Alan Ettenhoefer – U.P. Whitetails Assoc.

Guests

DNR U.P. Field Deputy - Stacy Welling Haughey, Wildlife Division Chief – Jared Duquette, Jay Wesley - Fisheries Lake Michigan Basin Coordinator, Brian Roelle - DNR Wildlife, Tom Seablom – Forestry Division., Bill Scullon - Wildlife Division

Meeting Call to Order

President Dave Johnson

Called the meeting to order. He then welcomed our guests. President Johnson said there were a lot of competing things going on in the U.P. and downstate this weekend that has resulted in a low turnout. A trapper’s convention is being held in Escanaba. MUCC is holding their yearly get together downstate, and it is a beautiful weekend for bird hunters to get out and enjoy a nice day in the outdoors. All these things have resulted in not having enough members present for a quorum. That being said, we won’t be able to vote on any agenda items, but we are here, and we have guests that have been so kind as to put together presentations. I suggest we go on with our meeting and try to better understand the issues at hand, and work towards resolving differences.

Minutes - We do not have enough members present for a quorum. The approval of the last meeting minutes will be delayed until our next meeting.

The election of officers - Will be moved to the next in person meeting with a quorum.

Treasurer’s Report - To be approved at next meeting with a quorum.

President Dave Johnson introduced new DNR Wildlife Chief Jared Duquette.

Chief Jared Duquette -stated he grew up in downstate Michigan. He enjoys outdoor activities including hunting, fishing and kayaking. Things he wants to work on and concerned about include, getting people outside especially with the pandemic, and loss of hunters. How do we increase the number of hunters and increase hunting revenue? Also stated was working to bring partners to the table to enhance efforts to improve habitat projects.

Chief Duquette additionally stated that he was familiar with the U.P. winter deer survival issues. He worked on the U.P. Predator Prey Studies.

Wolf Population Estimate – DNR’s Brian Rolle discussed how the DNR estimates the current wolf population. They use two methods in estimating the wolf population. They use occupancy models, and trail cameras.

UPSA Vice President Gary Gorniak and other UPSA members expressed concern about the accuracy of the estimation method. They feel the population estimate is low. Gary indicated that he thought a number of packs were not being included in the wolf population estimate. Gary requested the DNR work with local knowledgeable outdoorsmen to ensure all known wolf packs are include in the DNR tally.

Deer Hunting forecast and comparison to previous years was given by DNR Wildlife Bill

Scullon– Last year in the U.P 29,800 deer were estimated to have been taken. The archery season take was up 20 % from the previous year. The deer taken in rifle season was down 20%, and the muzzleloader take was up 40 % from the previous year. Of the bucks taken 19% were 1 ½ year old deer.

Predictions and indicators are: More deer should be available this year, anticipate more 1 ½ year old bucks, a decent acorn crop, and a bad apple crop. Midweek opening may affect up-coming stats.

Deer Winter Survival – DNR’s Brian Rolle - presented a PowerPoint on severe winter weather in the U.P. This led to discussion about baiting and feeding deer. Also discussed were wintering complexes and forestry practices of cutting in deer yards.

Items discussed were:

- A. Everyone agreed bad winters are hard on the deer population
- B. UPSA stressed that CWD has not been found again in the U.P. for a few years. UPSA would like to see the bait ban lifted in the U.P.

Forestry

DNR Forestry Division – Tom Seablom

The DNR has about 4 million acres in the U.P. It is co-managed for timber, wildlife, and fisheries. Items currently being reviewed or of concern include:

- A. Winter Habitat Review
- B. Strip Cutting of sugar maple
- C. Guideline development for oak wilt – moving to treating with chemicals
- D. Budworm – trying to salvage wood 2008 – 2021. Natural cycle should be on tail end.

UPSA Forestry Committee and U.P. Habitat Work Group Committee Member - Stuart Borden

Having good habitat is critical to have game species flourish. To that end the U.P. Habitat work Group has been working on Habitat Improvement projects. We have been administering grant applications. Gathering information, and determining costs and viability of projects.

This work is greatly enhanced by the cost sharing of with Safari International and co-operation and support of the Michigan's DNR. Tom Seablom, and Bill Scullon have been especially helpful in the endeavor.

Problems that need to be addressed to enhance the habitat improve are:

- A. Commercial Forest Act – Cedar & Renewable Forest Guidelines are not being followed. Cedar and winter complexes are being cut.

Fisheries, DNR & UPSA Fisheries Committee

Jay Wesley – DNR Fisheries Lake Michigan Basin Coordinator provided an update on fisheries items UPSA has express concerns with. They include:

- A. Walleye Management Plan _ the plan has been reviewed internally but has not yet been released to the public. UPSA has made extensive comments to this plan and is hoping our comments have been taken into account of the final product.
- B. Northern Pike Five Fish Limit for the entire U.P. – UPSA has expressed concerns stating it would like to see the default limit for northern pike changed from a 2 fish over 24 inches to a 5 fish limit with no minimum size. Jay state the DNR was not willing to make this change at this time. He stated individual lakes could be submitted for review and the DNR would look at the feasibility of changing submitted lakes on a case-by-case basis. UPSA's Fishery Committee chairman Floyd Dropps stated they have summited over 80 lakes for the DNR to review for the U.P., only around 3 or 4 lakes are being reviewed per year. With over 4000 lakes in the U.P. the review will never get completed.

Jay Wesley said the DNR was looking at modeling to see if it could be used speed up the process and backlog of lakes that would benefit from a five fish daily possession limit. Also looking at if it could provide enough information to determine if all lakes should be changed to a 5 fish limit.

- C. Under Water Spearfishing – The DNR at the direction of the NRC has put together a proposal which would allow for underwater spearfish of game fish in the Great Lakes. Under the proposal walleye, northern pike, and lake trout could be harvested with a spear-gun.

UPSA is not in favor of this proposal. UPSA feels the element of fair chase is taken out of the picture. Shooting fish in a weed-bed, would be like shooting fish in a barrel. UPSA thinks that this activity would soon expand from the Great Lakes to the inland waters. Similar to how the use of crossbows went from only seniors to everyone.

- D. Changes proposed for Lake Gogebic – The DNR has proposed a daily possession limit for northern pike consisting of five fish, with only one fish over 24 inches. The DNR is also looking at returning the walleye size limit to a 15-inch minimum size. Currently fishermen can keep two fish over thirteen inches as part of their 5 fish daily limit.
- E. An update was provided on the walleye fall fingerlings being stocked in Lake Michigan today by the Bay-De-Noc Great Lakes Sport Fishermen and the DNR. Thanks were given to the Bay-De-Noc Club and the DNR for their co-operative effort to improve the fishery.

Wildlife Committee

Committee Chairman Al Ettenhoefer - Al said a request from Richard P. Smith was made to UPSA. Mr. Smith would like UPSA to provide financial support to the legal defense fund for changes to the NRC. These changes would force regulation changes to deer hunting regulations. Since UPSA did not have enough members for a quorum to vote on this issue, UPSA President Dave Johnson said he would forward the information to member clubs.

A new wilderness area is being proposed for the U.P., since UPSA did not have enough members for a quorum to vote on this issue no action for or against was taken.

President Dave Johnson inquired about Covid 19 in whitetail deer. DNR responded that deer do indeed get Covid 19. A lot it not known at this time. The DNR is keeping an eye on it. Everyone at the DNR is following safety procedures to ensure it is not passed on from humans to deer or vice-versa. Hunters should be aware that transfer from deer to humans may be possible.

President Dave Johnson - also inquired about how the little brown bats were doing with the fight against the White Nose Syndrome. DNR Wildlife Biologist Bill Scullon the White Nose Syndrome was taking a toll, it would be a long recovery time. Modifying the temperature at wintering complexes as the Millie Hill Mine complex has been helpful.

The meeting was adjourned By UPSA President Dave Johnson

Report submitted by Floyd Dropps, UPSA secretary