

UPSA Quarterly Meeting February 17,2024

Members Present

Floyd Dropps – UPSA Secretary, Mark Spenser – MTPCA/NGLFA, Bob Usitalo - UPW of Dickinson County, Bill Maploch – UPW Schoolcraft County, Randy Pearson – Boundary Waters Musky Club, John Behrend – NORMENCO, Lyle Gearhart – Menominee Co. Pheasant Club, David Cords – no affiliation, Lon Brinkman – UPW Schoolcraft, Randy Trudgen – UPW Dickinson County, Gino Venditti – Wildlife Unlimited Dickinson County, Dave Johnson – UPSA President, Alan Ettenhofer- UP Whitetails Assoc inc., Gary Gorniak – Straits Area Sportsmen, Mike Holmes – MDAA, Denny Olson G.L.T.P.A., Darwin Dixon - EDCSC, Al Lewis – Great Lakes, J.M. Dawydko – West Branch Sportsmen, Charlamaine – NRA Hunter Nation, Daniel Absolon – NPTA Region, Howard Smith UP Whitetails Schoolcraft, Stu Boren – SCIF/USI,

Guests

Stacy Welling Haughey DNR U.P. Deputy Director, , DNR Northern Michigan Wildlife Supervisor Dave Lemmien, Karl Bohnak – Candidate for State Rep, Elizabeth Yelland - Candidate for State Rep, Julie Hoffmeyer – Congressman Jack Bergman’s rep, Scott Bowen – DNR Director, Dave Anthony – NRC, Tom Baird – NRC, Sara Thompson – DNR, Mark Zitnik DNR, Bill Scullen – DNR, Ed Golder – DNR, Scott Whitcoms – DNR, Tyler Petroelje - DNR wildlife researcher

Pledge of Alliance

Meeting Call to Order at 10:00 A.M. EST Great Lakes Sports and Recreation Club, Escanaba, MI

President Dave Johnson

Introduced and welcomed our guests and thanked them for coming to the UPSA meeting. Asked if the guests anything to share with UPSA and associated clubs.

Julie Hoffmeyer Aid to 109 District Congressman Jack Bergman

Congressman Bergman is in support of moving wolf delisting legislation forward.

Senator Ed McBroom

Legislation is in the works to take control of zoning permits for solar farms, away from local units of government. Solar energy firms are looking to acquire 350,000 to 400,000 acres for installation of solar panels for generation of electricity. Public service will decide where solar panels will be installed. Since land is less valuable in the U.P. than in heavier populated areas downstate it could have a large impact on the Upper Peninsula. Petitions are being circulated to put the zoning issue on the November ballot, 350,000 signatures are need for this effort.

Dave Johnson – This could affect migration routes and habitat. There are handouts at the back of the room for those wanting more information.

Karl Bohnak – question if switching to solar was a wise choice for Michigan as it has a lot of interruption.

Gino Venditti – The downstate Palisades Nuclear Power Plant will be coming back on line, able to deliver 800 megawatts of power. It also has contracts for most of that power with Michigan utilities. Will this affect the solar power farms in Michigan?

Senator Ed McBroom – most of the solar power is shipped out to the east coast. The demand is coming from a renewable energy program. Companies are buying up properties for various uses such as carbon offsets. This also puts pressures on commercial forests.

Julie Hoffmeyer – Congressman Jack Bergman’s rep - Companies are buying up properties for various uses such as carbon offsets. This also puts pressures on commercial forests. These changes can have a large effect on all the U.P.

NRC Chairman Tom Baird – Thanks for the invite to the meeting. I appreciate the chance to hear everyone’s view. So, if you have something you would like me to hear, catch me during the meeting and bend my ear.

DNR Director Scott Bowen – New to the DNR, on the job 6 months. Thanks for the invite. Concerned about the low deer numbers in the Upper Peninsula, downstate Michigan has the opposite problem with too many deer. Hopefully the new deer initiative programs can help to deal with these issues.

Proposed to state park funding- A slight change could be coming the next time you renew your registration. A proposal from Governor Gretchen Whitmer’s budget would automatically enroll drivers in the state park passport during vehicle registration. Currently, drivers renewing their registration are asked if they would like to pay an extra \$14 to get access to the state parks. However, the proposal lawmakers are considering requires drivers to opt out of the fee. The change is expected to raise participation rates and funding for state parks.

Fish & Wildlife Licenses have not seen a price increase for 10 years – license increases are also being looked at to increase revenue. Inflation is raising the cost of everything. To ensure the DNR can provide services in the future, the DNR needs to look at ways to generate more funds.

Deer Management Initiative, DMI – after the last deer hunting season, The DNR has heard your concerns about the lack of deer in the U.P. Meanwhile downstate the DNR has been dealing with the opposite problem of too many deer. It has become apparent that the habitat differences are great between the two peninsulas. Therefore, we are starting to separate Deer Management Initiative programs. One for the U.P. and one for the lower. Along with DNR

personnel, the DNR is looking to have conservationist, forest industry professionals, and agriculture representatives serve on these committees. You will be hearing more from these committees soon.

Alan Ettenhofer – Indicated that Dave Johnson and himself will be two of the members on this committee representing the Upper Peninsula.

Senator Ed McBroom – stated the charts for bears in the U.P. show a population growth. While biologists are trying to maintain the current population. More crop damage permits are needed to help reduce the damage bears, are causing to farmers crops.

DNR Director Scott Bowen – the DNR will look at resetting the bear population goal.

The DNR also has issues with CWD spreading, DNR not handling properly.

John Dawydko – Different thoughts on CWD and baiting. Baiting pulls deer in from banned areas.

Denny Olson – Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association voted in support of moving the wolf down state to help alleviate the overpopulation on deer. But seriously, we have good DNR people in the U.P. we need to listen to each other and work together.

DNR Director Scott Bowen – My Grandmother and mother are from the U.P. , mom was born in Stephenson. I caught my first walleye on Lake Gogebic.

NRC Member Dave Anthony – Cormorant Monitoring and Control department recommending \$150,000.00 for this year.

The DMI's for the U.P. and L.P. need to be managed differently due to weather patterns and predators.

We now have 3 NRC Commissioners from the U.P. We have Dave Nyberg from Marquette, himself, and Robin Clark. Robin earned a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Studies and a Master of Science in Community, Agriculture, Recreation, and Resource Studies, from Michigan State University. She is a member of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians and lives with her partner and two teenagers in their community at Baawiting.

Coyotes – Bad behavior of some hunters posting pictures of coyote pups online is hurting hunting. Do not want to have a big fight with anti-hunters all over again.

Dan Absolon – Coyotes are still able to be removed from private property. This will not change in the new proposal.

Senator Ed McBroom – The closure of coyote season during the 3-month period is a difficult issue.

Mike Holmes – Is there a proposal to require signage on traps near roads?

NRC Member Dave Anthony – not part of any legislation, it was just a proposal that did not go anywhere. Trapping is one of the first groups that the anti's go after. We need to stick together. We need to share our traditions and values of hunting, fishing, and trapping.

President Dave Johnson – we need to hold an election of officers. Asked if there are any nominations for officers.

Alan Ettenhofer - made a motion we keep Dave Johnson as president.

Charlamaine - seconded the motion –

Denny Olson – made a motion to close the nominations.

Mik Holmes - Seconded

Vote unanimous in support of Dave Johnson for president.

Dan Absolon made a motion to keep all other officers

Randy Pearson – 2nd motion

other nominations made; nominations closed

Vote unanimous in support of retaining current officers

President Dave Johnson - indicated that the minutes from the last meeting were available in the back of the room and had been emailed to members prior to the meeting. He asked for a motion to accept the minutes.

Alan Ettenhofer – request the spelling of his first name be corrected. Then made a motion to accept the minutes.

Denny Olson – seconded the motion.

Motion passed by acclimation.

President Dave Johnson - asked for a motion to accept the treasures report.

Motion passed by acclimation.

Wildlife Discussions & Presentation

DNR personnel Shara Thompson, Dave Lemmien, Bill Scullon, and Stacy Welling Haughey presented a PowerPoint on deer management. The PowerPoint covered historical U.P. deer

harvest data for around the last 20 years. Winter severity historical data. New trail camera usage to be used in helping to estimate deer population, deer habitat, and how monies are being managed by the wildlife division.

Dave Lemmien – In regards of the Deer Camp survey, the DNR is getting good participation from the camps. It is still a useful tool.

In looking for reason for the decrease in deer numbers, 8 of the last 10 winters have been severe with 90 days with heavy snows. This has been a huge factor in the deer herd numbers.

Gary Gorniak – Several hunters he knows are done hunting in the U.P. They are still hunting but since the deer numbers have plummeted, they have decided to hunt elsewhere.

Dave Johnson – in reviewing hunter numbers in Michigan I have found the numbers have been decreasing year after year. The decrease in deer harvest is down dramatically, with a 40 to 50 % decrease in the last two years.

Sarah Thompson – Expanded on the DMI. Giving a few more details on the groups focus on how to improve the deer herd. She thanked everyone that applied indicating that there were a lot of good applications. She also indicated that comments from everyone will be accepted by the DNR online.

Tyler Petroelje DNR wildlife researcher – gave a presentation on the wolf abundance project. This included info on how the wolves are currently counted in the winter using a track survey. He stressed that the wolves are at their lowest numbers during the winter, and the count is a *lowest count survey*. He provided info on pack size and how much area a pack will cover. Based on this data a total population estimate is developed. In April aerial surveys are conducted to help supplement the track surveys. The DNR has been placing trail cameras throughout the U.P. Information from these trail cameras look promising to further improved the population estimates.

Gary Gorniak – There is a difference between the wolf count and what the sportsmen are seeing. He hopes the new camera program will build trust between the DNR and the Sportsmen. Artificial Intelligence is being used elsewhere to identify individual animals, can it be used here? Also, how about thermal imaging?

Tyler Petroelje – It would be great, but we are not there yet. It will be a while before we have the technology. Thermal imaging is also a ways-out, although some experimenting with it was conducted down downstate.

Coyote Season – Possible Closure for Part of the Year

Dave Johnson – Explained there is an effort to close the coyote season for 3 months of the year in the spring while the coyotes are rearing their pups. Although the proposal would still allow for coyotes on private land about to do damage, to be taken. Coyotes are a predator that are affecting

our deer herd and we have fought hard to get a year around season established. They should be managed on a scientific basis.

Mark Spenser – The U.P. Trappers Association is against a 9-month season.

John Dawydko – West Branch Sportsmen Club is opposed to the shortened season. They were the first club in the U.P. to hold a predator hunt in the U.P. John indicated the hides are not worth much in the summer time. Also had problems with anti-hunter protesters at their gate, and problems with one person who improperly disposed of coyotes after the hunt. We all need to do our best to take proper care and disposal of our game animals.

Gary Gorniak – Made a motion to oppose the proposed 9-month season on coyotes.

Mark Spenser – seconded the motion.

Motion passed unanimously

Tom Baird NRC Chairman - thoughts on 9-month coyote season

First 12-month season in 2016

Adding three months did not lower population or change deer population.

Did it work or didn't it?

You cannot hunt down coyotes.

When you hunt them hard, they come back harder than before.

So, what do we do with this?

What is the best for the resource?

We are doing our best to sort it out.

Forestry Committee

Denny Olson – The Great Lakes Timber Professional Association is please to let everyone know that it is working with Bay College with its program for a Timber professional degree.

Dave Johnson – In talking with people in the timber industry, it appears that the current outlook is not good for the timber market. A lot of people are currently out of work.

Trappers Committee

Dan Absolon - The U.P. trappers will be hosting the trappings convention again in Escanaba.

Mountain Man Mike, a well know trapper, marketer, and maker of fur clothing items is having some serious health issues. If you get a chance please wish him well.

Recreation Committee

John Dawydko – It has been a very bad years for snowmobiling. The lack of snow has really hurt many businesses that have come to rely on the winter tourist industry.

Wildlife Habitat Work Group

Stu Boren – Working on wildlife Habitat Grants

Along with UPSA, talking with the DNR on wildlife and forestry issues, conservation easements- looking at how to manage.

Current goals.

1. Spalding township lands review
2. Visit with DNR's Tom Seabloom and discuss state land regeneration
3. Timber sales on state land – contract specifications on Lump Sum Sales.
4. Retention units – review

Bill Scullen – Gave an overview of the Highlands Conservation easement plan the is being developed. This plan would protect 73,000 acres from development and leave the land open to public use. The plan is still under development.

Stu Boren – UPSA would like to have the opportunity to revisit this plan as development occurs.

Fisheries

Floyd Dropps – The DNR is in the early stages of talking about the need for license increases for fisheries. The DNR had its last license increase in 2014. In 2014 the DNR was promising a commitment to helping the inland fisheries such as walleye. This did not happen.

The DNR needs to honor its commitments and goals, the DNR needs to get back to basics and spend money for boots on the ground. Local field personnel and restoring of the inland walleye program needs to be the number one priority of any license increase.

Support for Camp Josh

President Dave Johnson – We got a notice and thank you for past support from Camp Josh. Camp Josh runs a youth camp for disadvantage kids. We have sent \$500.00 in past years to help with this cause. Would anyone like to make a motion we continue our support this year?

Alan Ettenhofer – made a motion to support Camp Josh by sending them \$500.00.

Charlamane – seconded the motion

Motion passed unanimously

President Dave Johnson – With no one requesting to discuss further business before UPSA. Meeting was adjourned.

Minutes prepared by Floyd Dropps, UPSA Secretary