Presidents Message 05/20/2023

Folks,

Its only been a couple of Months from the last meeting. The DNR is just settling into new management with Shannon leading the department. Jim Dexter has retired at the end of April and Randy McClaren will replace Jim.

Following is an excerpt from a Stacy Haughey email.

Beginning April 2, Jared Duquette will be leaving his position as Wildlife Division Chief and stepping into the role of Human Wildlife Interactions Specialist, within the Wildlife Division. This voluntary move will allow Jared to use his previous research and human dimensions experience to develop and enhance partnerships with other agencies, governments, and organizations on wildlife-human conflict and resolution strategies. Originally the Human Wildlife Interactions position was going to include duties related to wolf management. Instead, we will be creating and filling a new position, the large carnivore specialist, located in the Upper Peninsula. This position will serve as the technical wildlife advisor for wolf and cougar management and coordinate regulation recommendations, policies, strategies, management plans, monitoring protocols, and engagement plans for the successful management of those species.

Also beginning April 2, Sara Thompson will serve as acting Wildlife Division Chief for at least six months. Sara was selected because of her administrative and leadership skills, along with her experience and history with Wildlife Division, to allow for a smooth transition while we take time to fill the chief position permanently.

I have attended the Legislative Sportsmen’s Caucus Meet the legislators and the breakfast the next morning in Lansing. I had a chance to meet our legislators and meet with some of the NRC Commissioners and some staff.

I also attended the Legislative Sportsmen’s Caucus Conservation Coalition Deer Work Group and the Solar Work Group.

I attended the fisheries Lake Superior and Lake Michigan Basin Coffee.

I attended the Camp Josh fund raiser in White Pine.

Following is an excerpt from Dr. Larry Holcomb’s review of solar and the work done by the Mackinac Research Center:

To: Solar Work Group

Please review and comment by e-mail - just trying to get started;
maybe discuss by other means as we continue as suggested by Justin.
You may reach me by phone 269-274-3146 (voice or text).

Development of Policy on Solar Energy

            First, we need to understand electricity production in
Michigan as it exists today; the amount produced (megawatts). Sources
available as of late 2018 were largely coal, natural gas and nuclear.
Wind and solar produced only about 5 percent and hydro, biomass and
petroleum and other gas, small percentages. Since then nuclear has
disappeared and solar and wind has slightly increased. A very
informative document, "Electricity in Michigan: A Preview", produced
by the Mackinac Center reviews the entire process of laws, rules and
policy for energy development now and for the future in Michigan. They
report that if the electric production industry were to replace fossil
fuels and nuclear with renewable energy there would be very large
increases in acreage required. Wind requires about 70 acres per
megawatt; solar about 43.5 acres. In comparison: nuclear, natural gas
and coal generation, just over 12 acres per megawatt. They recently
reported that to supply Michigan's energy needs with wind energy would
require 3470 square miles; with solar, about 920 square miles.

            Michigan Act 116 provided some tax relief to landowners
who agreed to protect their agricultural and open spaces from
development. The current Michigan governor's policy, together with
state department bureaucracies have collectively declared that the
solar energy industry sites are solar farms because they are
harvesting energy from the sun. Thus, many areas that were formerly
protected from development by Act 116 agreements are free to become
solar industrial sites in rural areas. Similar policy is being used to
allow wind energy industrial development sites that are called wind
farms.

            The Heartland Institute calculated that replacing all U.S.
traditional energy sources by solar would require 57,048 square miles
of land and 18.8 billion solar panels. With wind: 2.12 million
turbines and 500,682 square miles. Solar energy facilities are fenced,
so hunters are excluded as are all persons using the outdoors. Almost
all of these sites are on private farm land where crops of corn,
beans, wheat, hay and many other crops are grown as cash crops. Most
species of animals will be unable to live and reproduce inside the
fences, thus countless numbers are no longer present. So, for every
square mile taken up by the solar industry there may be 25 fewer deer
available to be hunted. If a township has two square miles fenced --
50 fewer deer. If four square miles, 100 fewer deer. If a county has
six square miles occupied by solar, 150 fewer deer; 12 square miles,
300 fewer deer; if 920 square miles, 23,000 deer. There may be
thousands of fewer turkeys; how many ducks and geese? How many
pheasants?

            In Michigan and the entire U.S. there is a definite trend
of fewer hunters every year. It is not just because of a reduction of
some wildlife, but lack of access to land having wildlife habitat.
Wildlife producing acres are decreasing every day. Solar industrial
sites are on the increase right now. Wildlife professionals and
conservation experts are concerned and call for more land to be set
aside for wildlife. Hunters, bird watchers and nature observers all
want to see more access to wildlife habitat. But that expectation may
not be met.

            So, in Michigan, all five MUCC pillars are greatly
impacted. Scientific management is impacted because of restricted
movements and stopping reproduction in game and non-game. Habitat for
wildlife is absent over hundreds of square miles. Wildlife will not
have access to food on land no longer farmed that presently occurs
after harvest. Access to private lands now available for hunting and
many other outdoor activities will be greatly reduced. This will occur
largely in southern Michigan where public access is more limited.

            In times when hunter numbers are decreasing, including the
dollars and matching fund dollars from sportsmen's licenses and
permits, decreasing wildlife habitat and private land access are very
important to R3 and long term sustainable funding of all conservation
efforts. It will be additionally important to recognize what is
projected to occur throughout the entire nation; 920 square miles in
MI but 57,048 nationwide. All of that will impact wildlife numbers,
decrease habitat, and lessen access -- all of which may decrease long
term sustainable funding for conservation.

Recommendations

            In terms of land use it is very important to realize the
definition of farm. Farm definition: A tract of agricultural land,
together with the fields, buildings, animals and personnel there
assembled for the producing of a crop or crops. Any land or water area
devoted to the raising, breeding or production of a specified type of
animal or vegetable life. Stop the practice of referring to solar
energy industry as solar farms. This is industrial; heavy industrial
development in what has been zoned as agriculture in towns and
townships. This process is prescribed in state law requiring
description and designation in Master Plans for land use and zoning
documents.

            All MUCC members need to recognize farmers as friends and
as producers of food for the nation and income from sales worldwide.
At the same time they are the primary owners and managers of land that
serves as habitat for a large portion of fish and wildlife. For corn
alone, in Michigan, on 920 square miles close to 98 million bushels
with a current value of 500 million dollars. For the nation it would
be 57,048 square miles producing over five billion bushels worth about
35 billion dollars. Farms also provide a rural atmosphere to a
community that appreciates the value of diversity.

Production of Electricity

            Michigan has lost production from nuclear, so coal and
natural gas are the prime producers in the state. Some of these
facilities were planned for operation for several more years. However,
recent plans by electric producing facilities are to shut down some
coal and gas plants much sooner and depend more on green energy.

            To prevent solar energy from developing there should be a
recommendation for retaining current facilities until plans for
alternative energy production can occur.

Nuclear Recommendation

            If one of the goals in Michigan is to reduce CO2,
particulates and other emissions, we would recommend nuclear plants.
There has been development of small nuclear reactors that would
provide a more stable source of energy than solar or wind. Virginia is
one state that is planning on this type of energy production. Because
these units are much smaller than conventional nuclear plants, they
are easier to site and construct.

            Once policy is accepted - propose to several bodies and
share with other organizations including those related to
conservation, agriculture and energy.

            MUCC is aware of the multitude of state and federal
policies about energy and where the money goes. We should understand
that recent hearings before the State Energy Commission on energy
production were largely attended by green energy industry and
environmental organizations testifying in favor of solar and wind and
stopping the use of current facilities. Lots of funds were utilized by
those organizations to convince commission members to turn to green
energy options quickly.