**UPSA Quarterly Meeting Octobe 14th, 2023**

**Members Present**

Dave Johnson - UPSA President, Gary Gorniak – Straits Area Sportsmen’s Club, Norm Balko - UP Whitetails Alger County, Floyd Dropps - UP Inland Walleye Council, John Dawydtio – West Branch Sportsmen, Dan Absolon – U.P. Trapper, Randy Trudgeon – U.P. Whitetails, Frank Pearson – BDNGLSF, Lyle Gearhart – NORMENCO, Randy Pearson – Boundry Waters Musky, Mike Holmes – Michigan Darkhouse Assoc., Darwin Dixon – EDCSC, Chorlemaine – NRA, Tyler Rilchie – UP Whitetails Dickinson Co., Bob Ushalo - UP Whitetails Dickinson Co., Tom Murray - UP Whitetails Dickinson Co., Gino Venditti - UP Whitetails Dickinson Co., Mark Spencer – MTPCA, Bob Doepker - UP Whitetails Dickinson Co., Allen Ettenhofer – UP Whitetails Assoc. Inc.

**Guests**

Stacy Welling Haughey DNR U.P. Deputy Director, Melody Wagner candidate for 109th district, DNR Law Division officers Jared Ferguson & Sgt. Brian Bacon, DNR Northern Michigan Wildlife Supervisor Dave Lemmien

**Meeting Call to Order at 9:00 A.M. C.S.T at the Bethany Lutheran Church, Quinnesec, Mi.**

**President Dave Johnson**

**Called the meeting to order**. Introduced and welcomed our guests and thanked them for coming to the UPSA meeting.

**Treasures Report -** Treasurer Dan Absolon presented the Treasures Report. Not Enough clubs present to vote on accepting report.

**Minutes** – Minutes from the May 20 th 2023 meeting were presented for approval by SecretaryFloyd Dropps. Not Enough clubs present to vote on accepting report.

A motion was made to accept the agenda

**Trappers**

**Dan Absolon –** Fur Bearer work group was for first of September. There is some talk within the DNR of moving coyote season back. Trappers are opposed to possibly losing 25% of their season if this change is approved.

**Mark Spenser –** Mark Spenser to put a resolution together opposing shortening of the coyote trapping season. Mark Stated all surrounding states are opening year around, predators are causing population problems with game animals, why is the Michigan DNR looking at shortening the season?

**President Dave Johnson -** provided his president’s report:

**Attended an CAC – NRC get together**. This year’s meeting was in Escanaba. It is held once a year, when the NRC holds its meeting in the Upper Peninsula. This meeting allows UPSA and other U.P. groups to get together with the NRC commissioners on an informal basis to discuss areas of concern.

**Attended the NRC meeting**. Bill Ziegler, UPSA’s Fisheries Technical Advisor put on a 15-minute PowerPoint presentation before the NRC Fisheries Committee. His presentation was on the need to change the current northern Pike regulation on the 24-inch minimum size. Bill’s presentation explained that the current regulation is not working in most U.P. lakes. If the minimum size limit were removed it would allow for more fish to be kept that will never reach the current minimum size. It would also provide a chance to reduce the over abundance of pike in lakes which has the potential to improve size structure, and allow for improved fish diversity. The NRC failed to approve the UPSA resolution on northern pike, instead they added 4 more lakes to the U.P. no minimum size limit with one over 24 inches. These lakes are to be re-evaluated in 5 years.

**Logging Expo –** The 77th Annual Great Lakes Timber Professionals Expo was held Sept. 7 – 9th at the U.P. State Fairgrounds in Escanaba.

**Bear Forum –** The Michigan Department of Natural Resources held a Michigan Bear Forum from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Aug. 19 at the Little Bear East Arena, 275 Marquette St., St. Ignace.

**Guiding Bill –** The Michigan Guiding bill failed in the House.

**Highlands -** The Michigan Department of Natural Resources is working with Lyme Great Lakes Timberlands, the owner of a large tract of land in the Michigamme Highlands, to protect it through a working forest conservation easement. The proposed Michigamme Highlands Conservation Easement Project —spanning portions of Marquette, Baraga, and Iron counties — would give the DNR easement rights while the land would remain privately owned by Lyme. The easement would ensure that the land is sustainably managed for a variety of purposes in perpetuity. The project would encompass 73,000 acres.

**Michigan Senator Ed McBroom –** provided updates on legislate issues

**Guiding Bill** – failed in the House. Thought MUCC’s Testimony on Energy may have turned everyone against the issue.

**Agriculture and Natural Resources** is the new committee in the Michigan Senate.

**Commercial Fishing Bill** - is an ongoing piece of legislation. Laws are being filed by commercial fisherman on the issue.

**Senate and House of Representatives numbers in possible tie –** due to legislators assuming other positions, future productive sessions of the legislature may be moved further into the future until the issue is resolved.

**Improved NRC / Legislator Co-Operation –** The working relationship between the NRC and the Legislators is much improved providing better communications of issues.

**Cormorants** – Please get in contact with Senator John Bumstead on this issue as he is the lead legislator.

**Youth Hunter Safety** – Currently hunter safety classes which teach responsible and safe use of firearms, cannot be taught in schools in the State of Michigan. Sportsmen are looking for legislators to write a bill, which will allow the teaching of gun safety in the classroom. All gun handling and field activities would be done off school property.

**Allen Ettenhofer – UP Whitetails Assoc. Inc.** – Allen indicated his group is sponsoring a Hunter Safety class, that is being held at the DNR pocket park, at the U.P. State Fairgrounds.

**Stacy Welling Haughey DNR U.P. Deputy Director**

**DNR Budget –** The Budget for the DNR is tight only getting .7 % of the overall state budget monies.

**Gun Range** – The Marquette County gun range has been completed. The monies for the range come from the Pittman Roberts act. The Pittman Roberts act collects monies from excise taxes on guns and ammo. The range is an excellent facility with target ranges out to 400 yards. If you get a chance, please visit the site, and use it to site in your gun this fall.

**Wildlife**

**Wolf Population Studies / Review**

**Stacy Welling Haughey DNR U.P. Deputy Director & DNR Northern Michigan Wildlife Supervisor Dave Lemmien –** showed a PowerPoint presentation detailing the DNR’s alternate method of gaining insight of wolf and other wildlife populations. The program uses trail cameras placed strategically throughout the U.P. to gather information on wolves and other wildlife.

A pilot program was started in 2022 to help better understand the dynamics of the wolf population. It was thought this would provide advantages over the current track method, and the call method, which appears to only get about a 25% response from wolves.

In the year 2022, 4200 wolf pictures were captured.

The program was scaled up in 2023, there are currently 1200 to 1500 cameras across the U.P. They have captured over 67 million pictures. The DNR uses software developed to determine what animals the cameras are viewing. It has an accuracy of 95 % of identifying the correct animal. At the present time it cannot identify individual animals, and that multiple pictures of the same animal are a given, it is still a tool that can be used and scaled with tracking to provide a better estimate of the wolf population.

**U.P. Michigan Wildlife Supervisor Dave Lemmien –** Stated thatthe camera use will allow the DNR to estimate pup population to get something other than the low count during the winter.

**Gary Gorniak** – Stated that we need an average wolf population count. Everyone is using the low winter count and it is misleading, and hurting the effort to get the wolf of the Endangered Species list.

Gary also mentioned there is an online site “U.P. Wolves Only” that has over 1600 pictures of wolves from the Upper Peninsula taken by people throughout the U.P.

**Frank Pearson –** Asked what the carry capacity of the wolves were in the U.P. and if the population estimate is conducted in the same manner in Michigan and Wisconsin.

**U.P. Michigan Wildlife Supervisor Dave Lemmien -** The wolve populationis at its current carry capacity, and that the states conduct their surveys somewhat differently. Wisconsin uses volunteers and Michigan uses DNR personnel. Wisconsin verifies their finds with GPS coordinates. Current low winter estimated population is 631 wolves.

**Moose Population –** is conducted every other year. Marquette Lanse and Baraga counties is considered the core area. This area is flown over to determine the sex and number of adults along with numbers of calves. This past year the survey was completed in February. It took 14 days to complete the survey. The DNR has been getting reports that moose are being sited more often outside of the core area. The use of the recently deployed trail cameras will help in determining if these sightings are just a few moose wondering outside the core area or if the core area is expanding. The latest survey has the moose population estimate at 426 Moose in the core area. Those in the eastern U.P. and outside the core area are not included in this count.

**Chronic Wasting Disease Testing** – Free testing for CWD is available for Iron, Dickinson, Gogebic, and Menominee Counties. These are the border counties with Wisconsin, and testing is being conducted in these counties at a higher level due to concerns that Wisconsin has CWD.

Zones have been established throughout the state for testing and monitoring of CWD. The priority of the testing and monitoring will be on a rotational basis. Year 2025 will be a high priority for the Upper Peninsula.

Individuals who harvest deer in other counties of the U.P. that would like to get their deer tested will be required to pay for the testing. Please contact the DNR for the process required to receive a test kit. The individual will receive a test kit and be required to remove the lymph node and mail it in for testing.

**Mike Holmes** – Does the kit for CWD come with instructions to guide a person through the process?

**U.P. Michigan Wildlife Supervisor Dave Lemmien –** Yes, the kit comes with instructions, but DNR technicians can be contacted for help if needed.

**Frank Pearson** – suggested that if the DNR is not getting enough deer brought in by hunters for testing, the DNR may want to test road killed deer, that are brought to pit areas by road work crews.

**John Dawydtio** – When a moose is hit by a car and needs to be dispatched, why can’t the driver of the vehicle get the meat as is done with deer?

**Sgt. Brian Bacon –** Moose are a protected animal and different requirements are in place for the disposal of the meat. The meat is donated to the public, usually to local food pantries.

**Wildlife Committee Reports**

**Allen Ettenhofer**

**DNR Population Estimates –** Sportsmen are having a hard time trying to match up the DNR’s estimates to the numbers of wildlife seen in the field. This goes for deer and wolves.

Delta County Forest – The Delta County Forrest is a 1400-acre forest project that was bought in 2018 by DNR Funds along with matching funds from Delta County. Local sportsmen’s groups have also contributed to this worthwhile cause. Due to covid, many of the improvements were delayed for 2 years. Progress has been made more recently on many of the plan developments. The property is open to the public and worth checking out if you are in the area.

**Gary Gorniak**

**Cormorants -** DNR Fisheries Chief Randy Claramunt tried to get money from the legislature to no avail. He is now trying to find other funding sources.

**Wolf Hunt Obstacles –** Gary stated in his opinion the state year-long process being proposed, to get a wolf hunt after federal protection delisting, is the Governors doing. It is not at the request of the DNR Commissioners.

**DNR Camera Program –** Likes the Camera program. There is also a user group on Facebook called “U.P. wolves only” that has pictures of wolves sent in from throughout the U.P. It seems to be showing a lot more wolves than people thought were in their areas**.**

**Dave Johnson**

**Moose Hunt Resolution –** The U.P. Citizens Advisory Committees passed a resolution supporting a moose hunt. Please review this resolution and we can discuss if UPSA want to propose a resolution along a similar line.

**Fisheries**

**Dave Johnson**

**Discussions with new Fish Chief Randy Claramunt** – Had a chance to sit down and talk with the new fish chief for a while the night before the U.P. NRC Meeting. Conversations were positive and am hopeful of an improved working relationship with the Fisheries Division moving forward.

**Northern Pike Minimum Size Limit PowerPoint –** at the October 10th NRC Meeting held in Marquette, UPSA’s fisheries committee science expert Bill Ziegler presented a PowerPoint showing why most of the lakes in the U.P. should be returned to no minimum size limit. The DNR was not enthusiastic about the presentation. They want to do more studying and research on this issue.

**Floyd Dropps –** Also had the chance to sit down with new fish Chief Randy Claramunt. He also hopes that Randy will usher in a new era moving forward with the DNR Fisheries.

Bill Ziegler did an excellent job representing UPSA at the NRC meeting. His PowerPoint on “No minimum size limit for Northern Pike” was well researched and present in a professional manner.

**Frank Pearson –** The legislation is again looking at new Commercial Fishing Regulations. It is too bad but the legislature is not looking at the science needed to maintain and sustain a fishery. Instead, it appears that it is all political, what can we get to make a better income for commercial fishermen.

**Forestry**

**Dave Johnson – Carbon Credits -** also known as carbon offsets, are permits that allow the owner to emit a certain amount of carbon dioxide or other greenhouse gases. One credit permits the emission of one ton of carbon dioxide or the equivalent in other greenhouse gases. Some interesting reading on carbon credits are out there for those interested. And local workshops have also become available from time to time. Please contact me if interested, and I might be able to steer you to some good articles.

**Recreation**

**John Dawydtio**

**The new gun range** is open in Marquette County. It is a very nice facility. If you have not sighted in your deer rifle yet, you may want to take it up there and check out the new range. Targets out to 400 yards are available.

Trails in the Houghton area are being worked on and hopefully will be completed by the time snowmobiles season begins.

Motion to Adjourn by Chorlemaine

Second – Unanimous by proclamation

Meeting Adjourned