

Proposed Resolution #1
Requires 2/3 Majority

Submitted by: George Lindquist, Past President
MUCC region: 1
Proposed: March 12, 2022 Conservation Policy Board meeting
Title: Gate on Commercial Forest Act Properties

Background/Problem:

There is no requirement under current law for a Commercial Forest Act (CFA) landowner to indicate that a gated property is open for public access, and the presence of a gate may dissuade individuals from accessing property they otherwise have a right to access. CFA land is required to be open to foot traffic for hunting, trapping, and fishing purposes and the presence of a gate may impede that access. In addition, most CFA properties are in the Upper Peninsula and may be outside of cell phone service signals if accessing online resources or calling information may be required.

Resolution Content:

- That MUCC work with the State Legislature to enact changes to the Commercial Forest Act to require that any gates put up on Commercial Forest Lands be labeled with the contact person's name and contact information, through signage, or readily identified with a universal system, such as paint color, as Commercial Forest Land and open to foot traffic by the public.

MUCC Current & Past Policy Standings:

- MUCC has passed a handful of policy statements regarding commercial forest act properties.
 - In 2012 members voted on the following: A resolution requesting that MUCC: 1) work with the DNR and the Michigan Legislature as required to rewrite appropriate sections of CFA policy to ease restrictions on access and use of land held under the act; 2) work with the DNR, NRC, and the Michigan Legislature to allow appropriate public use and access to CFA lands as the property safely allows for the purpose of hunting, trapping, and fishing based on management practices and laws currently in place by the Michigan DNR; and 3) work to educate users of CFA lands and public lands on the respectful use of these lands to minimize damage to the resource and preserve future access.
 - In 1988 MUCC passed this resolution: MUCC urges that landowners of listed Commercial Forest Act lands be required to conspicuously post this fact on the land. Also urge that Hunting and Fishing Guides include information detailing public rights under the CFA.

Arguments in Support of Resolution:

- By requiring some form of marking it would allow users of CFA properties to easily know whether or not the land is in fact open to foot traffic.
- Unmarked properties with gates, whether meant to impede or dissuade foot traffic or not, indicate to many that the public is not welcome there, and go against the spirit and letter of the law.

Arguments in Opposition to the Resolution:

- Enforcement is an issue; there is a question as to who will be responsible for ensuring compliance.

DNR Response:

Owners of commercial forest land are only required to provide foot access to the public to hunt, fish, and trap. Motorized access requires landowner permission. Commercial Forest administrative Rule 299.2605a (3) states that “Fences and gates do not disqualify land from listing if the owner allows public entry for hunting and fishing.”

There has been an increase in gates on commercial forest land due to the increase of the public using motor vehicles on the land without the owner’s permission. These vehicles have caused damage to the roads, which has left the owners solely responsible to repair them.

The Department provides multiple resources to the public to identify land in the commercial forest program before they enter the property. These resources include the commercial forest website with a GIS map, a list of owners by county with the legal description of the land, and their contact information. The public may contact the Department directly to confirm the land is in the commercial forest program. The Department’s MI-Hunt app also shows all the land that is open to public hunting, including those enrolled in the Commercial Forest program.

Requiring owners to label their gates with contact information or paint color, and maintain the signs from destruction, tearing, falling off, or weathering is a burden on the owner and is a duplication of existing information. It could also lead to confusion if the universal paint color happens to match a gate color on a non-commercial forest or easily be established in an incorrect location. This is particularly burdensome for owners that have thousands of acres in the program. Requiring owners to provide signage or paint on their gates could cause owners to withdraw their land from the program and discourage enrollment.

The commercial forest program has over 2.2 million acres and enforcing current regulations is difficult. The Department receives limited resources for this program, which are insufficient to properly enforce current program requirements.

MUCC Wildlife Committee:

Proposed Amendment 1: Line 9, after the word signage add “obtained from the DNR and purchased by landowner.

Proposed Amendment 2: Line 10, strike the words “paint color”

Some concern about extra burden on participants may sway involvement. This program is a huge tax break that owners should expect there to be requirements. Some form of uniform signage is important, regardless of who provides it.

Position:

- SUPPORT: Wildlife Committee, with above amendments.
- OPPOSITION:
- NEUTRAL:

Proposed Resolution #2 **Requires 2/3 Majority**

Submitted by: George Lindquist, Past President

MUCC region: 1
Proposed: June 26, 2021 Conservation Policy Board meeting
Title: MUCC Supports Enbridge Line 5 Tunnel as Best Alternative

Background/Problem:

The Great Lakes is the largest freshwater system in the world. Eight states share more than 10,000 miles of shoreline along 95,000 square miles of freshwater. The Lakes provide drinking water to 40 million people, generate hydropower, and provide a home for 170 species of fish.” With such great resources, it is our responsibility as citizens of Michigan to preserve, protect and enhance our Great Lakes. Currently, there is a piece of infrastructure, a nearly 69-year old twin pipeline running through the Straits of Mackinac, that has divided the state on what to do about it. Clearly, MUCC’s first interest is in protecting the freshwater from oil/hydrocarbon pollution; but there are many ways to do so.

Resolution Content:

- That MUCC support Enbridge’s underground tunnel project as an important infrastructure update, and that this be carried out in the safest, most reliable manner possible.
- That the state requires Enbridge to be responsible financially for the construction and operation of the tunnel holding the state harmless, that Enbridge provide the State with financial assurances (not including self insurance) that would cover cleanup of a catastrophic release to the Straits and that the company submits an acceptable monitoring plan.
- That MUCC ask the State of Michigan to work with Enbridge and its contractors to move this project forward.

MUCC Current & Past Policy Standings:

- MUCC always has advocated on behalf of Michigan’s woods and water remaining clean. MUCC passed the bottle deposit initiative to reduce littering, advocates for various forms of renewable energy, and conducts its OTG program to improve wild spaces. As it relates specifically to Line 5 there is one policy resolution.
 - In 2018 MUCC passed the following resolution: MUCC will work with the National Wildlife Federation and other decision makers to protect the Great Lakes from any oil spill, including serious consideration of alternatives to pipelines across or below the Great Lakes.

Arguments in Support of Resolution:

- Despite appreciation of alternatives to fossil fuels, fossil fuels are a reality for the foreseeable future.
- 55% of all Michiganders receive propane transported through the line.
- The tunnel is planned deep underground, with the newest and best technology available.
- Other means of transportation are inefficient and present their own safety risks.

Arguments in Opposition to the Resolution:

- Presents unnecessary risk to the Straits of Mackinac and the Great Lakes as a whole.
- Enbridge is already responsible for the largest oil spill in Michigan history.
- Would tie Michigan to fossil fuels for decades to come.

DNR Response:

The state, through the Governor and the Department has revoked and terminated the 1953 Easement for the existing Line 5 pipeline. This is currently the subject of ongoing litigation between Enbridge and the State. Due to the ongoing litigation, the Department is unable to provide additional comments on this proposed resolution.

MUCC Wildlife Committee:

Fossil fuels are needed, as well as a safe means of transporting them. The technology for a safe tunnel is strong and proven.

Position:

- SUPPORT: Wildlife Committee
- OPPOSITION:
- NEUTRAL:

Proposed Resolution #3

Requires 2/3 Majority

Submitted by: George Lindquist, Past President
MUCC region: 1
Proposed: March 12, 2022 Conservation Policy Board meeting
Title: Siting of Solar Farms on State Land

Background/Problem:

There is growing concern as the state and federal governments require a shift to more and more renewable energy that solar farms will end up on DNR lands commonly used for recreational purposes, as these properties present low hanging fruit for solar development. Along with concerns regarding losing hunting, trapping, fishing, or non-consumptive recreational land the solar farms could disrupt the natural ecosystems and displace native pollinators. The draft MI Healthy Climate Plan (March 2022) for the state currently states an objective to *“Implement a plan to site solar on state-owned lands and properties to help deploy solar across the state as quickly as possible. Complement this work by assisting local units of government in adopting best practices for siting renewable energy systems within their communities.”*

Resolution Content:

- That MUCC recommend to the DNR and Legislature, if need be, that the DNR not sell, lease, or give up rights to public lands unless clear guidelines are developed with a public input process for doing so, and those guidelines should include wording that solar farms only be allowed in areas ill-suited for other uses.
- That the MUCC work with the DNR and legislature to ensure that any solar farms subsequently built on public land be planted in native pollinator mixes and paved areas minimized.

MUCC Current & Past Policy Standings:

- MUCC has long supported renewable energy resources when practical, and in consideration of natural resources and wildlife, including solar energy proposals. There is also one policy requesting that the MNRTF is amended to also receive a portion of funding from solar and wind energy. On the same token MUCC has long advocated that wildlands stay wild, and that should the DNR lease, sell, or abandon state owned land that an equal or greater area of land be purchased to replace it.

- In 1976 MUCC passed a resolution in support of renewable energy: Support development of solar, wind, and geothermal energy supplies.
- From a 1979 Resolution: MUCC seeks legislation to insure continued use of natural solar installations when they have been installed in a prudent manner.
- In 2020 MUCC passed a resolution to diversify funding for MNRTF and SPEF: MUCC will use the strength of its 40,000 plus hunters, anglers, trappers and conservationists and over 200 affiliated local clubs around the state to support an addition to the MNRTF to include the extraction of renewable resources, or creation of renewable energy. Further, MUCC will work with our state legislature to see that Bonuses for lease rights, rent on acreage, and percentage of gross values of solar and wind energy creation is deposited into the MNRTF, and ultimately the State Parks Endowment Fund (SPEF). MUCC will also work with the legislature to see that these Bonuses for lease rights, rent on acreage, and percentage of gross values will not negatively impact the establishment of renewable energy sources.
- From a 1999 passed resolution: Request that the DNR hold a public meeting in the area where any state owned land is proposed for sale and that any revenues from such sale be reinvested to purchase land of equal or greater value to the public trust.

Arguments in Support of Resolution:

- There are plenty of state owned lands that currently exist that are more suitable for solar farm placement, and have more infrastructure in place. Such as prison lands or highway right of ways.
- The default should not be DNR owned lands simply because they are the most plentiful.
- Solar farms can be biological deserts, and ensuring native flora, and pollinators is essential to the health of the ecosystem.

Arguments in Opposition to the Resolution:

- DNR owned lands are the most plentiful state owned lands in Michigan and would provide the most opportunities.

DNR Response:

The Department acknowledges the concerns raised by the loss of hunting land, especially in southern Michigan where public lands are limited. Having public lands readily available for hunting, make it easier for new hunters and those without access to private land to try and hopefully adopt the sport. The Department also recognizes the climate, ecological, and public health benefits of the transition to clean energy. Changing over to renewable energy sources will require lands to be converted from their current uses to those for energy generation.

To meet clean energy goals established by the utilities, solar energy development will have to happen at a large scale across both peninsulas. This will require thousands of acres of land to be used for renewable energy production. Land use choices on both private and public lands will need to be carefully evaluated and considered.

Siting renewable energy on capped landfills, brownfields, former industrial sites, parking lots, and lands impacted by past industrial uses is often a better use for these degraded lands. The Department manages 4.6 million acres of land for a variety of outcomes and holds some of these degraded sites in our land portfolio. Siting renewable energy on degraded state lands managed by the Department or on surplus lands managed by other agencies such as the Department of Corrections or State Land Bank can help meet the renewable energy needs of utilities. This will also avoid the conversion of valuable agricultural lands and provide a source of revenue to the Department that can be reinvested in natural resources management. There are many types of use that occur on state lands that may result in decreases in wildlife habitats or lands available for hunting. These include such uses as gas and oil production, siting of central processing facilities, mining, sand and gravel pits, asphalt plants, or siting of cell

towers, among others. The Department has existing processes in place to evaluate these uses and we can use these processes to evaluate renewable energy siting while further direction to staff is being developed. While taking agricultural and forested lands out of production is not optimal, it may be considered in certain circumstances, especially where such use of the land can be mitigated by providing replacement lands elsewhere to provide for wildlife habitat and hunting. Finally, we recognize and appreciate the value of pollinator species and the ecological benefits and services they provide. Where appropriate, they may be considered as a vegetation type used at renewable energy developments.

Position:

- SUPPORT: Wildlife Committee
- OPPOSITION:
- NEUTRAL:

Proposed Resolution #4
Requires Simple Majority

Submitted by: Ronald Burriss, Past President, Region 7 Director
MUCC region: 7
Proposed: March 12, 2022 Conservation Policy Board meeting
Title: Hunter’s Safety Training at Local Clubs

Background/Problem:

For decades’ conservation clubs around the state have been the backbone of Michigan’s Hunter, Bow and Trapper education programs. These clubs have provided space for the programs to be held since its inception in the 1960s. On top of facilities, many club members have donated countless hours of their time as volunteer instructors. At one point Michigan had more than 4,000 instructors. Today that number hovers around 2,100.

Instructors and clubs feel as though they are not being prioritized for the value they bring to the hunter education program. They also worry that changes to the current program may not support their ability to continue to offer classes as they have for decades.

Resolution Content:

- That Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC) work with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to defend the in-person Hunter Safety field day and test at local clubs as the first priority and virtual instruction as a second choice when in-person is not available.
- Michigan United Conservation Clubs actively encourage and recruit clubs and instructors to participate in in-person Hunter Safety Classes.
- That Michigan United Conservation Clubs start a dialogue with the appropriate authority about reasonable compensation, for ammunition and targets, to encourage more clubs and more instructors to sponsor and participate in Hunter Safety Classes.

MUCC Current & Past Policy Standings:

- MUCC runs a hunters safety program at its camp, multiple clubs and members are instructors and/or host hunters safety classes, and MUCC has a resolution on the issue.

- Passed in 2018: MUCC will work with the State Department of Education, Intermediate School Districts, and local school districts to provide access to promoting, advertising and providing information about firearm safety classes and hunter education classes at local, regional and state facilities and other range facilities open to the public.

Arguments in Support of Resolution:

- In-person learning continues to be the most effective means of educating for the majority of learners in Michigan and the United States.
- A robust Hunter Education program will continue to create safe and ethical hunters for generations to come.
- Many clubs have quality archery and firearm ranges that are good teaching spaces for hands-on live fire training
- Increasing the amount of money clubs can charge to provide the course, would allow clubs to cover their class expenses including ammo, as well as make them equal to what the online option charges.

Arguments in Opposition to the Resolution:

- The traditional multiple day course offered by many clubs, does not always fit into the time schedules for busy youth or adults.
- Increasing the allowable cost of the class, may create the perception that clubs are trying to profit off a program that the USFWS has stated should be free.

DNR Response:

The Department supports the requirement of an in-person field day. The Department currently has three hunter education course delivery methods which include a traditional classroom, take-home study, and online. The take-home and online methods must be followed up with an in-person field day. Each of these three methods meet the minimum national hunter education standards. The Department supports and encourages a blended learning experience.

The hunter education program is operated through a federal US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) grant. Their position is hunter education should be free of charge to restrict barriers. No student should be denied access due to the inability to pay for it. Based on guidance from the USFWS, the Department's hunter education instructor policy allows instructors to charge up to \$10.00 per student to cover the costs of ammunition, targets, disposable hearing protection, snacks, etc... Instructors cannot collect a fee for their time, travel, and so on. Instructors, who charge a fee, are required to submit an expense report after each class documenting the money collected and how it was used for that class.

MUCC Wildlife Committee:

In person teaching is arguably the best method known. Online is charging a fee of \$29.00 per student, drivers training is in-person so firearm/hunter training should be as well.

Position:

- SUPPORT: Wildlife Committee
- OPPOSITION:
- NEUTRAL:

Proposed Resolution #5
Requires Simple Majority

Submitted by: Region 5
MUCC region: 5
Proposed: March 12, 2022 Conservation Policy Board meeting
Title: Hunter Education

Background/Problem:

Hunter education instructors are concerned about the Michigan DNR changing the current hunter safety program to a virtual platform. The resolutions writers want to emphasize the importance of in person learning.

There is also some confusion from instructors about who is liable if a student who passes hunter safety is later found to be unsafe in the field. Does the liability fall on the individual instructors, the club that hosted the class, the DNR or the unsafe individual?

Resolution Content:

- Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC) work with the MDNR Education division to establish a committee of representatives from the MDNR, Hunter Education Coordinators, and Instructors to re-evaluate the current program: to address safety concerns, criteria for successful completion, and acceptable instruction.
- That the committee meets semi-annually to evaluate the successes and weaknesses of the program.

MUCC Current & Past Policy Standings:

- MUCC runs a hunters safety program at its camp, multiple clubs and members are instructors and/or host hunters safety classes, and MUCC has a resolution on the issue.
 - Passed in 2018: MUCC will work with the State Department of Education, Intermediate School Districts, and local school districts to provide access to promoting, advertising and providing information about firearm safety classes and hunter education classes at local, regional and state facilities and other range facilities open to the public.

Arguments in Support of Resolution:

- Regular program evaluation is the backbone of creating adaptive and effective programming.
- Due to the size of the hunter safety program in Michigan, rumors start and spread easily. Having a designated committee that meets more frequently would strengthen the connections between the volunteers and the DNR staff and would allow the program to dispel rumors in a timelier manner.
- Creating a representative committee would provide input and insight for an array of instructors who could contribute new ideas to continue to strengthen the hunter education program.

Arguments in Opposition to the Resolution:

- Currently the DNR already meets annually with the county coordinators (lead hunter ed instructors) to discuss the program.

DNR Response:

Since 2006, the Department has provided three delivery methods for the hunter education program:

1. Classroom – a minimum of 10 hours across a minimum of two (2) days
2. Take Home Study followed by in-person field day – students must receive the student manual a minimum of one week prior to the field day. They must complete the chapter reviews in the manual to gain entrance into the field day.
3. The online course is followed by an in-person field day – students must show their field day voucher as proof of completing the online training to gain entrance into the field day.

This provides the greatest opportunity and versatility for students to complete the course while requiring in-person contact. The recent "push" for virtual training was due to the COVID 19 restrictions which did not allow in-person courses to be conducted. This was a temporary solution during the national pandemic. When restrictions were lifted last spring, instructors were able to return to in-person teaching. A temporary solution is no longer an option for students. The Department already has a "committee" that formally meets annually to discuss and review the program. The "committee" consists of the Law Enforcement Division Recreation Safety staff and the hunter education county coordinators, who are volunteer instructors. Each spring this group meets to discuss the program, including the curriculum, policy and procedures, law and legal updates, teaching methods, new equipment, and other pertinent information. Recreation Safety staff also conducts monthly virtual meetings with the county coordinators to keep the lines of communication open. Any recommended changes to the printed materials are submitted to the publisher, Kalkomey, who will review and ensure that the recommendation meets national and educational standards. Additionally, the Recreational Safety staff encourages and welcomes feedback at any time from all instructors, students, parents, and others who view the program. Information is collected and reviewed for consideration.

MUCC Wildlife Committee:

Long time instructors are strongly behind this. DNR comments state that a committee already exists. We may be able to work with that committee to better engage and address this resolution intent. Some feel the DNR may be being pushed into the on-line method, but it is unknown why or by whom.

Position:

- SUPPORT: Wildlife Committee
- OPPOSITION:
- NEUTRAL:

Proposed Resolution #6

Requires 2/3 Majority

Submitted by: Michael Riepen, Michigan Deer Track'n Hounds Tracking Club
MUCC region: 8
Proposed: March 12, 2022 Conservation Policy Board meeting
Title: Resolution to provide an exception for the use of drones/UAS (Unmanned Aircraft Systems) for the recovery of legally hunted big game animals.

Background/Problem:

Currently the definition of “take” in Michigan statute includes the act of kill, chase, follow, harass, harm, pursue, shoot, rob, trap, capture, or collect animals, or to attempt to engage in such an activity and precludes the use of drones to take or recover wounded animals. Some individuals feel as though the use of drones or unmanned aircraft systems could aid in the recovery of legally hunted game species and that an exception for this purpose should be put in the law, and that hunters have a moral responsibility to use any and all means necessary to recover legally hunted game.

Resolution Content:

- That Michigan United Conservation Clubs work to provide an exception for the use of drones/UAS for the ethical recovery of legally hunted, wounded big game animals on private land only with permission following the current DNR conservation order pertaining to tracking dogs.
- That Michigan United Conservation Clubs support and work with the State Legislature, The Department of Natural Resources, and The Natural Resources Commission to amend any laws or policies contradictory to the purposes of the above suggested changes; and to provide exceptions for the specific goal of recovering an already wounded, legally hunted big game animal.

MUCC Current & Past Policy Standings:

- MUCC has a single policy as it relates to drones, opposing its use in any way as it relates to hunting or trapping of game.
 - In 2012 MUCC passed the following resolution: Work with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Natural Resources Commission (NRC) and the legislature to bring about a law to make it illegal to use a drone to assist in any way the hunting or trapping of game or fishing in the State of Michigan; and to prohibit the use of drones as a tool of harassment of hunters, trappers, or anglers.

Arguments in Support of Resolution:

- Hunters have a duty to expend every reasonable effort to recover a wounded game species.
- Drones/UAS could cover an area of land exponentially faster than an individual may on foot.
- The resolution carves out a specific set of circumstances in which a drone could be used to prevent from the drone being used as a method of hunting.

Arguments in Opposition to the Resolution:

- The use of drones/UAS could interfere with other hunters' experience.
- If used in any commercial capacity federal aviation laws may apply.
- Use of drones/UAS would inadvertently allow the user to locate other game, potentially changing or adding a target.

DNR Response:

Allowing the use of drones/unmanned aircraft systems for the recovery of legally hunted big game animals would cause concerns for Conservation Officers. This would be difficult for our Conservation Officers to enforce or discern the intent of the hunter (collecting or pursuing). This could also increase trespass and hunter/user conflict while having a negative appearance to the public with fair chase. Further, it may be difficult to determine if the game animal that you locate is the same game animal you are attempting to collect. The propensity to unknowingly cross from a legal activity to an illegal activity is high.

MUCC Wildlife Committee:

DNR points were well taken. Some felt the private property stipulation helped this to be an acceptable resolution with stress to recovery only. Possibility of contacting DNR ahead of this usage to report the situation. Concern to public perception of this use as well as possible harassment or gathering of “other than” the wounded animal. This came to a roll call vote for our position.

Position:

- SUPPORT:
- OPPOSITION: Wildlife Committee
- NEUTRAL:

Proposed Resolution #7
Requires Simple Majority

Submitted by: Abraham Downer, MUCC Conservation Policy Board
Travis Powers, MUCC Executive Board

MUCC region: 3 & 8

Proposed: March 12, 2022 Conservation Policy Board meeting

Title: Resolution to recommend that the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Division, always have a dedicated, full-time Upland Game Bird Specialist on staff.

Background/Problem:

The department has made comments privately that it will not hire an upland game bird specialist after the retirement of the former specialist. It will divy up the duties amongst existing staff.

Michigan’s upland game bird hunting opportunities, including turkey, pheasant, quail, ruffed grouse and woodcock, are second to none. Without a dedicated upland game bird specialist, our state could lose sight of what unique and diverse opportunities we have for bird hunters and create negative lasting impacts on communities throughout the state who depend on hunters in the fall.

Resolution Content:

- That Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC) support and advocate that the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Division, continue to have a dedicated, full-time Upland Game Bird Specialist employed by the agency.

MUCC Current & Past Policy Standings:

- MUCC does not have a current policy specifically relating to upland game bird specialists. There are a number of policies however relating to other staffing issues within the DNR. Examples being the RAP line, forest fire suppression, fisheries division vacancies.

Arguments in Support of Resolution:

- The department has made comments regarding traditional duties of the upland game bird specialist being divided into the workloads of several department staff who already have assignments. This will degrade the nature of upland game bird management in Michigan.

- Upland game birds under the specialist’s purview included ring-necked pheasant, bobwhite quail, ruffed grouse, American woodcock and the Eastern wild turkey.
- Michigan’s rich habitat is why we lead the world in American woodcock harvested, number of woodcock hunters and number of woodcock banded. We are also a premier destination state for ruffed grouse – one of three, including Wisconsin and Minnesota.
- Other species recovery success (wild turkey for instance) can be directly attributed to past DNR upland game bird specialists.

Arguments in Opposition to the Resolution:

- Rarely has MUCC taken positions on what staff members should be employed by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. In general, the organization has trusted that DNR leadership understands needs better with an inside view.
- The department has limited resources to employ its staff.

DNR Response:

The Department agrees that the upland game bird program is a critical component of the agency. We have staff across the state dedicated to doing the work required to manage and promote this program. Our intention is to continue to have professional staff dedicated to managing upland game birds and small game.

MUCC Wildlife Committee:

DNR is trying to do more with less. Now there is a specialist that does furbearer and small game, concern this responsibility is currently slated to land with that position. Woodcock, grouse and pheasant are all seemingly down from where they were. A central contact is needed for hunters to be able to contact and work with. Very important to many Michigan communities.

Position:

- SUPPORT: Wildlife Committee
- OPPOSITION:
- NEUTRAL:

Proposed Resolution #8
Requires Simple Majority

Submitted by: Abraham Downer, MUCC Conservation Policy Board
Travis Powers, MUCC Executive Board

MUCC region: 3 & 8

Proposed: March 12, 2022 Conservation Policy Board meeting

Title: Resolution to recommend that the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Division, study the American Woodcock population, its habitat and develop a long-term plan to address their declining population.

Background/Problem:

American woodcock populations are declining at a rate of 1 % annually and have continued to do so for 50 years. Being migratory in nature, woodcock recovery will require state, regional and national buy in. For Michigan, communities from the Upper Peninsula and throughout the Northern Lower depend on these migratory birds to bring hunters into their communities in the fall. Traditionally, Michigan has led the charge in terms of woodcock research and management.

In 2022 a piece of legislation was introduced putting in statute that the DNR convene a Woodcock Restoration committee to formulate a plan. MUCC was specifically listed in that legislation as a member. The DNR opposes this statutorily-mandated plan, but has indicated they may be more open to a stakeholder input method.

Resolution Content:

- Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC) support and advocate that the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Division, study the current American Woodcock population, its habitat and develop a long-term plan to address their population and habitat decline.

MUCC Current & Past Policy Standings:

- MUCC does not have any specific resolution relating to a woodcock plan. MUCC does however sit on a few advisory committees, for instance Executive Director Amy Trotter served on the WMAC.
 - In 1998 MUCC passed a resolution to improve woodcock habitat: MUCC cooperate with the USFS, USFWS, MDNR, the MI Sharp-tail Grouse Association (MSGGA), other interest groups and private landowners to develop a strategic plan to identify specific sites, acreage and cost estimates for such open habitat creation, enhancement and maintenance for sharptail grouse and other dependent species.

Arguments in Support of Resolution:

- Having an American woodcock plan that Michigan can use to lead the regional and national efforts of the species is in our best interest for the bird, the hunters who pursue woodcock, the communities who depend on the economics and other species who depend on young successional forests and openings.
- If such a plan is already in practice, compiling it into one document that can be disseminated, shared and used would place Michigan at the forefront of the woodcock's decline and position us to carry on our legacy as a leader in woodcock management – such as we have been for the past 30 years.

Arguments in Opposition to the Resolution:

- This type of plan already exists in practice, though not explicitly written. It would be burdensome to department staff to have to write its own plan when other agencies and departments have written woodcock plans.

DNR Response:

The Department is committed to managing woodcock and considers woodcock a priority species. We have, and will continue, to manage for woodcock on state lands and we have recently increased the capacity to manage for woodcock on federal lands through the Good Neighbor Authority. In addition, woodcock is a featured species in Michigan and will be given additional focus in state forest planning. These landscape-scale plans will guide forest management on state forest lands and will look to maintain and enhance woodcock habitats. Michigan partners with the USFWS to manage migratory birds such as woodcock and will continue to do so. There is an existing national woodcock management plan that Michigan uses as a guide as well as supporting other planning and

habitat-related guidance for species such as golden-winged warblers; a species that uses similar habitats to woodcock.

Given the number of plans dedicated to woodcock and habitat management and the priority and focus already given to woodcock in Michigan, the development of an additional plan specific to woodcock in Michigan would reduce the amount of time and effort that can be devoted to the ground management efforts and would provide an extra layer of planning that would not enhance management efforts. We do not support the idea that an additional plan is needed for woodcock but do agree that woodcock is a priority species in Michigan.

MUCC Wildlife Committee:

Proposed Amendment 1: Line 25, Strike the words “wildlife including the”

Proposed Amendment 2: Line 40, after the last word (decline) add: If an upland game bird specialist be appointed this issue is slated as one of that person's responsibilities.

Possibly combine rough grouse with the woodcock plan. This position would need to be done by an upland game specialist to assure the interest was in the correct place. MUCC has supported similar plans before that have had no action, such as the Moose plan. If this is passed it will likely take some leg work to see it through.

Position:

- SUPPORT: Wildlife Committee, with above amendments.
- OPPOSITION:
- NEUTRAL:

Proposed Resolution #9

Requires 2/3 Majority

Submitted by: Rob Miller
MUCC region: 5
Proposed: March 12, 2022 Conservation Policy Board meeting
Title: State Land Access Closures

Background/Problem:

MUCC membership has become increasingly concerned with private landowners acquiring land on either side of public land and gating off access to the public land that had been traditionally open for public use. These individuals are gaining exclusive access to lands that should be open to the public. This resolution was not intended to imply that private driveways or private roads now be used as easement to public land, rather that the DNR remediate the issue of landowners purchasing small tracts of land to gain exclusive access to public property.

Resolution Content:

- MUCC (Michigan United Conservation Club) work with the DNR (Department Natural Resources) and Michigan Legislature to not allow the blockage of a trail or road system that accesses state property by a private landowner claiming ownership to such trail or road.

- That MUCC work with the DNR to create a system that does not allow the sale of state lands that have an existing trail or road necessary for access to other public state properties without maintaining a right of way to all associated state, public property associated with said trail/road. This right of way will need to maintain or improve the level of access available prior to the sale to private property.

MUCC Current & Past Policy Standings:

- MUCC supports public access to public lands. Whether it is boat access sites, commercial forest act properties, or DNR owned forests. There are a number of policies on the books as it relates to ensuring the public has access to its lands.
 - From 1987 resolution: MUCC urges the DNR to identify all public land that is landlocked, or otherwise unavailable to the public. Following identification of these lands, MUCC urges gaining access to these lands through acquisition, or exchange, using the Natural Resources Land Trust Fund if necessary.
 - From 1977: Seek legislation to protect and save public access parcels.
 - From a 2002 resolution: MUCC will support land exchanges consistent with MDNR policies that consider the following criteria:
 - No significant loss of acreage
 - No significant loss of fair market value
 - No significant loss of recreational value including hunting, fishing and trapping or public access
 - Equal or improved wildlife/fisheries habitat
 - Water frontage is received for water frontage
 - Consolidates state holdings
 - Reduces trespass or access problems
 - Land in surplus to MDNR needs
 - Exchange is given appropriate public notice and interested parties are given opportunity to comment.

Arguments in Support of Resolution:

- Public lands need to be accessible to the public.
- This is intended to address the loss of access to public lands that have historically allowed access.
- Does not include private trails or driveways that have been used exclusively for private purposes.

Arguments in Opposition to the Resolution:

- Who would be responsible for identifying these pieces of land?
- Where will the funding to monitor this come from?

DNR Response:

The Department fully supports efforts to maintain access to state lands that have historically been accessed by trail roads crossing private ownership. This type of access to land, both publicly and privately owned, is common throughout Michigan. However, the Department recognizes that there may be dominant rights held by private landowners that would limit public access to state lands without a legally recorded easement in place. To counter these potential issues, the Department is continually acquiring property rights that provide both legal and physical access to other state lands. Through land purchases, land exchanges, and the purchase of easements, the Department has increased access to thousands of acres of previously inaccessible properties. In addition, all appropriate avenues are pursued when legal access across private ownership is interrupted. The Department also

regularly reserves the public right of way easements on the sale of state lands when the sale would otherwise reduce or eliminate access to other state lands.

MUCC Wildlife Committee:

Proposed Amendment 1: Strike lines 13-15.

Concern from people that already own such lands. Concern about funding a buy back of right of ways. This resolution is about moving forward with new sales and not allowing access to be lost due to sales of land with right of ways to public lands. The striking of lines 13-15 is an effort to better strengthen the above point.

Position:

- SUPPORT: Wildlife Committee, with above amendment.
- OPPOSITION:
- NEUTRAL:

Interim Resolution
Requires 2/3 Majority

Submitted by: Michigan Resource Stewards
MUCC region: 9
Proposed: April 13, 2022 Executive Board Meeting
Title: Reaffirmation of MUCC’s dedication and belief in Proposal G and an independent, transparent Natural Resources Commission.

Background/Problem:

The current DNR administration has found and applied a section of Michigan statute that most everyone had thought was superseded when Proposal G was passed in 1996. This section of law, MCL 324.40107, gives the DNR the authority to set bag limits and quotas, season dates, and geographic boundaries of units. Under this interpretation of the law, the NRC would only have authority over method and manner of take, equipment, and things like baiting and APRs.

The DNR has begun to publicly wield this authority in a manner that subverts the intent and spirit of Proposal G, and is the first administration to separate this power publicly. MUCC staff did not receive information to date as to why the DNR has desired to limit NRC authority, or if there is an assumption of a legal vulnerability they are seeking to address.

Since the resolution passed the board on an emergency basis the Director has begun having talks with the Attorney General’s office and NRC commissioners to clarify the existing authorities. Regardless of the outcome of a legal review, a permanent fix in statute may still be required proactively if MUCC desires to see the NRC have primary authority over hunting and trapping.

Resolution Content:

- That MUCC take action to ensure Proposal G’s original intent is upheld.

MUCC Current & Past Policy Standings:

- MUCC has had unwavering support for and belief in Proposal G since its inception. The organization was founded in the belief that a commission based model of conservation decision making is the best way to protect our natural resources from politics and emotion, ensuring that sound science would dictate policy.
 - Dating back to 1996 a resolution in support of what would eventually become Proposal G: That Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC) seek a constitutional amendment having as objectives the following:
 - Declare fish and wildlife of paramount importance to its citizens, and vest all authority for fish, wildlife and habitat management in the Natural Resources Commission;
 - Remove the fish, wildlife and habitat management from political interference;
 - Give the Natural Resources Commission adequate authority to carry on all essential phases of a broad conservation program embracing both wildlife, fishery and their habitats.
 - Assure the commission form of decision making; public access and public participation is present in natural resources decision making.
 - That the MUCC works to create a constitutionally protected, independent commission.
 - Reaffirmation with the Scientific Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act: A tribute recognizing efforts of members of the Michigan legislature in passing Public Acts 21 and 22 of 2013 (the Scientific Management of Wildlife Package—giving authority to the NRC to name game species and issue fisheries orders) and the importance of sound scientific management of our natural resources and the partnerships created and strengthened by this initiative.

Arguments in Support of Resolution:

- The commission method of conservation removes many political pressures versus a single person unilateral making policy.
- Keeping the process open and transparent, accepting public input, and making decisions based on sound science is the reason MUCC was founded in the first place.
- With this power centralized on one person it is entirely possible an animal rights activist attain the role of DNR Director and wields this power in a way harmful to conservation, hunting, trapping, and angling.

Arguments in Opposition to the Resolution:

- The commission has shown in the past a willingness to cave to public pressure, without scientific or data to support amending a recommendation from the DNR.
- There is no requirement that the commission be conservation or scientifically literate

DNR Response:

Awaiting DNR comment.

MUCC Wildlife Committee:

Great concern with protecting proposal G of 1996 as well as the Scientific Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act of 2014. Last February there was an attempt to pull powers from the NRC and land them with the DNR that would put the DNR in a position to create bag limits, units and seasons. Concern with political opinion finding a way to take away from the non-partisan NRC responsibilities.

Position:

- SUPPORT: Wildlife Committee, with proposed amendment.
- OPPOSITION:
- NEUTRAL: