

Michigan Wildlife Council

DRAFT MINUTES

February 26, 2021

A meeting of the Michigan Wildlife Council (MWC) was held Friday, February 26, 2021, by Zoom due to the current COVID-19 pandemic and the financial and administrative restrictions.

Present

Nick Buggia, Chair, MWC
Jeff Poet, Vice Chair, MWC
Kristin Phillips, Treasurer, MWC/
Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
Matt Pedigo, MWC
Jason Garvon, MWC
T. Elliot Shafer, MWC
Henry Stancato, MWC
Ed Roy, MWC, joined by telephone
Pam Vance, DNR

Emmie Musser, Gd Marketing
Jill Holden, Gd Marketing
Chelsea Maupin, Gd Marketing
Sara Williams, Gd Marketing
Ally Caldwell, Gd Marketing
Andrea Ness, Gd Marketing
Beth McKenna, Gd Marketing
Zach Krieger, Gd Marketing
Mark Duda, Responsive Management

Absent (Excused): Beth Gruden, MWC

Call to Order

Chairman **Buggia** called the meeting of the MWC to order at 10:00 a.m. All present were welcomed to the meeting, and instructions were given for the video call.

Approval of Agenda

Chairman **Buggia** asked for discussion on the agenda. There was no discussion. **Garvon** made a motion that the agenda be approved as submitted. **Poet** seconded the motion. The agenda was approved unanimously (7-0).

Approval of December 11, 2020, Minutes

Buggia called for approval of the December 11, 2020, minutes from the MWC meeting. There was no discussion. **Shafer** made a motion that the minutes be approved as submitted. **Garvon** seconded the motion. The Council approved the minutes unanimously.

Gd Marketing Presentation Meeting Notes

Sara Williams, media manager for Gd Marketing, reviewed the campaign from July 1 – December 31, 2020. **Williams** briefly revisited the 2020 communications strategy and a timeline of events, provided an overview of tactics employed, and detailed notable highlights from this period.

- The campaign garnered 121,576,617 impressions and 2,659,859 engagements (clicks to website, likes, shares, and video views) from July through December 2020.
- While impressions were down year over year, the number of engagements was strong and website traffic was up 108% year over year.
- This fall, the campaign was successfully elevated during hunting season, most notably via a partnership with Crain's Detroit Business that brought together key figures in

hunting, fishing, and conservation, and an earned media push that focused on the increased participation in hunting amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

- The micro-campaigns were launched on September 22. This social and digital display campaign was developed to deepen an understanding of our messages to engaged individuals.

Ally Caldwell asked permission from the participants and then started recording the meeting at 10:38 a.m.

Chelsea Maupin introduced **Mark Duda** and turned the meeting over to him.

Mark Duda, Responsive Management, specializes in studying Natural Resources and outdoor recreation projects. GÜD Marketing partnered with Responsive Management for the first time on the 2021 Statewide Survey. **Duda** presented a summary of the results from the annual statewide survey, including methodology, timing, purpose, and key measures. The survey methodology was changed for this last study. In previous years, an online survey was used. The new methodology used was a scientific, probability-based telephone survey using the same questions and adding a few new ones. **Duda** explained the advantages of a telephone survey. The black residents of Southeast Michigan were oversampled in a supplemental study. The survey was conducted between December 2020 – January 2021.

***Ed Roy** joined the MWC meeting by telephone at 11:27 a.m.*

Duda reviewed results related to statewide approval of hunting and fishing, reasons for approval/disapproval, and overall knowledge of wildlife management and its funding. Implications for the campaign include:

- Key campaign audiences remain the same: Southeast Michigan, Black Michiganders, young adults, and women.
- More messages are relevant and engaging. Conservation funding is an important benefit message but requires less reinforcement moving forward.
- The existing campaign is not engaging Black Michiganders.

NOTE: The presentation slides are posted to Basecamp.

Stancato inquired if it was correct for the council to conclude that there were favorable trends in public attitudes? **Duda** responded that it was correct.

Stancato commented that there were indications that the campaign is likely one of the reasons for the positive trends, and **Duda** replied that data supports that conclusion from a number of angles.

Stancato noted that in the past there had been criticism leveled at the council for presenting the research in a more favorable light. He went on to say that the work that was seen today conclusively debunks that criticism. **Duda** said he was familiar with the concern about extra hunters in the sample and what would happen if that number went down. He said he looked at that in this survey. **Duda** brought the quantity of hunters down to 15% from previous surveys, and it did not change the final numbers.

Stancato congratulated his colleagues and GÜD Marketing for taking the criticism, validating, and being better prepared to answer questions about the annual survey in the future.

Maupin explained the discrepancy and correction in the 2015-2017 survey data.

Buggia commented that the number of people voting “neutral” on the survey was down, and that the MWC has high support. It was noted that the negatives also went up and questioned if

that was due to demographics or something else? **Duda** replied that it was demographic related and difficult to get into a community that is more predisposed to opposing hunting.

Garvon inquired about how researchers parse out the impact of each of the demographics (in the super-graphs). **Duda** answered that you need an appropriate number of responses to make it accurate. A survey can have multiple demographics, but looking at them individually, sometimes you can see that a particular trend is going on. **Duda** went on to explain that researchers can do multi-variant comparisons and try to identify if there is one variable that impacts all of it.

Holden asked **Duda** what could be expected for next year with the variables that were seen last year. **Duda** expects to see a drop in the participation of hunting and fishing because of the decline of COVID. The last bump of hunting was after the housing crash. Housing starts were one of the important variables in hunting participation. More blue-collar people in trade jobs will not have time to hunt.

Poet commented that when unemployment is high, the DNR license sales go up. There's definitely a correlation between the two. The MWC is investing money into this campaign and showing good results. He followed up with a question to **Duda** to provide insight on conditional support for hunting -- deer vs bear, wolf, dove. The stakeholders are expecting results in moving the needle on other species.

Duda noted that there are huge swings in public support of hunting for various species.

- 1) 80% for deer
- 2) 30% for bear and wolf

All the things we know about human attitudes toward hunting are tied into the words "trophy hunting." It's not what we say, it's what people hear. It's about talking about common motivations. We both agree that habitat is important. That wildlife is important.

Beth McKenna, senior public relations manager for GÜD Marketing, introduced three key events that will be of special importance to the campaign during the summer months:

- 1) Free Fishing Weekend (June).
- 2) Michigan Wildlife Conservation Month (July).
- 3) Bass Pro Shop's U.S. Open National Bass Fishing Amateur Team Championship's stop on Lake St. Clair.

Sara Williams then presented details for the execution of these campaign strategies, including overall investment and tactics for each:

- Broad Awareness: Outdoor, video everywhere, TV, paid social, radio, digital audio, event marketing.
- Targeted: Custom video, content marketing, social media, influencers & partnerships, digital display, niche content.
- Advocates: Niche content, toolkits, point of purchase.

Buggia asked for a motion to approve the media plan as presented. **Phillips** made the motion, and **Elliott** seconded it. The motion passed unanimously.

* * * * *

Buggia dismissed the council for a break at 12:21 p.m. for ten minutes.

* * * * *

The meeting reconvened at 12:30 p.m. **Caldwell** announced that part of the GÜD Marketing team would be signing off.

Public Comment

Chairman **Buggia** called for public comment at 12:35 p.m. There were no comments.

Buggia turned the meeting over to **Phillips** for the Treasurer's Report.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer **Phillips** submitted the written financial report for April 1, 2020 through November 30, 2020 (attached) and asked that MWC members contact her with any questions, in the interest of keeping on time.

New Business

Garvon presented an Endangered Species Update. There is a draft of talking points regarding wolves for MWC members to use if they get questions on the subject. The subcommittee will continue to meet periodically to review the topic and legislation.

Buggia acknowledged that this was the end of the term for **Pedigo, Stancato, and Poet**, but that the MWC hoped they would be open to continue to meet with the council until new representatives are chosen.

Next Meetings

May 14, 2021	Detroit (Location TBD)
Aug. 20, 2021	Traverse City (Location TBD)
Oct. 22, 2021	Upper Peninsula (Location TBD)

Ongoing Level 2 Subcommittee Approvals Needed

Content marketing materials
Spring 2021 campaign materials

Adjournment

Garvon made the motion to adjourn, seconded by **Poet**, and the motion to adjourn was approved unanimously (7-0). The MWC meeting was adjourned at 1:33 p.m.

APPROVED Date: _____

Nicholas Buggia, Chairperson