

MICHIGAN WILDLIFE COUNCIL  
SEMIANNUAL REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE  
Public Act 451 of 1994, Section 43532b(18)(b)

Approved by the Chair of the Michigan Wildlife Council on November 15, 2021.

The following is the semiannual report submitted to the Legislature documenting activities of the Michigan Wildlife Council (MWC) for the second half of fiscal year 2021.

As mandated by 2013 PA 246, the mission of the MWC is to develop and implement, in conjunction with a third-party marketing or advertising agency, a comprehensive media-based public information program to promote the essential role sportsmen and sportswomen play in furthering conservation through wildlife management and to educate the public about hunting, fishing, and the taking of game. Scientific wildlife management practices are essential for maintaining healthy ecosystems across the state, and these activities receive most of their funding from the sale of hunting and fishing licenses and the equipment used to participate in these activities. The mission is funded by a \$1 surcharge on all Michigan base hunting and fishing licenses.

The MWC contracts with GÜd Marketing of Lansing to develop and implement the marketing campaign. Extensive research and a baseline survey of Michigan's residents conducted in 2015 were used to set the foundation for the Council's work. Every year, a subsequent survey is used to measure changes in understanding and to refine the objectives for the next year.

Objectives of the campaign are to increase awareness that fishing and hunting are good for Michigan, even for people who do not hunt or fish. Some of the benefits described in the campaign include:

- Fishing and hunting are good for people, because they are opportunities to spend time outdoors and with friends and family and provide food.
- Fishing and hunting are good for Michigan's jobs and economy.
- Fishing and hunting are good for wildlife, because they are a primary source of funding for wildlife conservation.

The promotional strategy that was implemented this year was focused on delivering key messages to the targeted audiences (ages 18-34, black Michiganders, Southeast Michigan, female, ages 35-54). The last survey showed more room for growth with these groups than the general population. The Council, in response to the survey findings, has invested more in targeting communications, custom imagery, and messaging for each audience.

A new tactic used this year was the creation of a fictitious character, Annette Finnegan, to help connect more closely with the target audiences. Annette is upbeat and friendly and inserts bits of humor and campaign information each time she appears. These videos are 30 or 15 seconds in length depending on the medium being used. Clips of Annette were used on TV (5 broadcast networks and cable channels in Grand Rapids and Detroit), billboards across Kent, Wayne, and Macomb Counties, social media, digital display, and digital video. The following links provide some examples of Annette in fishing ads this spring and summer.

- [Fishing is great for the economy.](#)
- [Fishing is great for families.](#)
- [Fishing is great for Michigan.](#)

Annette is portrayed by real-life Zavia Ferguson who truly is upbeat and quirky. She also enjoys fishing and will go on her first hunting trip this fall with one of our council members, Beth Gruden. Being a part of the effort has offered her the opportunity to learn about the benefits of hunting and fishing to our state – so much so that she has often shared the campaign with her friends and family.

Multiple social influencers were enlisted this year who could authentically reach specific audiences through posting on Facebook and Instagram. Social influencers are people who are genuinely interested in a subject area and have a following on social media with a desired target audience. The social influencers allowed the campaign to make more genuine connections, which showed through the comments published to each featured post.

Work with the Detroit Lions' Frank Ragnow continued through the summer. New ads with Frank have been filmed and used successfully on social media and online digital video platforms. Published in late summer, [Frank visited Belle Isle to learn more about the wildlife](#) and [went fishing](#) with a DNR conservation officer. Both videos garnered 943,226 impressions, 54,737 video views, and 1,840 engagements across platforms. There was a [marketing news article that was published about Frank](#) on Freep.com, LSJ.com, and DetroitNews.com, and it outperformed USA Today branded content benchmarks in terms of engagement, page views, unique visitors, and scroll depth (how far someone scrolls down a webpage).

From April 1 through September 30, 2021, the campaign garnered 66,455,401 impressions (views) and 1,996,956 engagements (clicks to website, likes, shares, video views).

The Council continues to partner with hunter and angler mediums to deliver key messages. The Mike Avery Radio partnership includes monthly interviews, social media posts, and weekly radio spots. In addition, the Council partners with Michigan United Conservation Clubs' (MUCC) Michigan Out-of-Doors Magazine, including a featured article and print ad in every issue. The newest members of the MWC, Franklin Hayes (West Bloomfield) and Brent Pike (Grand Haven), will be featured in a question-and-answer article in the Michigan Out-of-Doors Magazine winter edition that will hit mailboxes and newsstands on December 1. Furthermore, the Council will partner with MUCC to publish content in TRACKS Magazine, a publication delivered to select elementary and middle schools.

During the fall of 2021, the Council focused messages on the benefits of hunting during a time when it's top of mind for key audiences. This year will mark the first year that hunting messaging will be shared more broadly, as a focal point of the campaign. November is also a great time to promote the comeback of Michigan's wild turkey population. In support, an article about the turkeys' revival in Michigan will be published in the Detroit News and the Detroit Free Press, and the Council will again sponsor the "Turkey Tom" balloon in America's Thanksgiving Day Parade in Detroit.

To learn more about conservation efforts in Michigan, including how they benefit from hunting and fishing, visit the Michigan Wildlife Council at [HereForMiOutdoors.org](https://www.hereformioutdoors.org).

The next annual statewide survey will take place in early December 2021. The survey will mimic the 2020 survey in terms of research partner (Mark Duda's Responsive Management), timing and methodology. Notably, this year's survey will include an online component to gather feedback and data on recall of campaign elements. In addition, four virtual focus groups (consisting of 5-7 people from Southeast Michigan) will be held similarly to in-person groups but conducted via an online video platform. This will allow the council to pull from a wider sample of

participants while retaining the benefits of in-person focus groups – with the overall goal of deepening the understanding of viewers that have lagged behind the general audience.

The current council includes:

Nick Buggia, (Chair) Mayville  
Jason Garvon, Brimley  
Ed Roy, Traverse City  
Hank Stancato, Detroit  
Kristin Phillips (Treasurer, DNR director's designee)  
Brent Pike, Grand Haven  
Beth Gruden, Perrinton  
T. Elliot Shafer, Grosse Pointe Woods  
Franklin Hayes, West Bloomfield

The MWC appreciates the Legislature's continued support and the opportunity to report on its activities since May 2021.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nick Buggia". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "N".

Nick Buggia, Chair  
Michigan Wildlife Council

In compliance with Section 43532b(18)(b) of PA 451 of 1994, the Michigan Wildlife Council provides the following summary of Fiscal Year 2021 expenditures for the Michigan Wildlife Management Public Education Subaccount that was created within the Game and Fish Protection Account.

**Fiscal Year 2020-21 Expenditures for the Michigan Wildlife Council**  
(October 1, 2020 through September 30, 2021)

<b>Expenditure Description</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Research/Marketing/Creative/Media	\$1,909,815
<u>Administrative</u>	<u>220</u>
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$1,910,035</b>

## Michigan Wildlife Council Media Appearances

May 2021 – October 2021

### Media Articles

[Anyone can pitch in to help nurture Michigan's monarch butterfly population](#)

Detroit Free Press  
May 10, 2021

[Anyone can pitch in to help nurture Michigan's monarch butterfly population](#)

The Detroit News  
May 10, 2021

[Michigan to hold Free Fishing Weekend June 12–13](#)

FOX17  
June 1, 2021

[Elk, sturgeon and osprey – oh my! How Michigan saved wildlife from extinction](#)

Detroit Free Press  
July 1, 2021

[Elk, sturgeon and osprey – oh my! How Michigan saved wildlife from extinction](#)

The Detroit News  
July 1, 2021

[Fishing is at the center of it all for Detroit Lion All-Pro Frank Ragnow](#)

Detroit Free Press  
August 5, 2021

[Fishing is at the center of it all for Detroit Lion All-Pro Frank Ragnow](#)

The Detroit News  
August 5, 2021

[Opinion: Celebrate conservation success during National Hunting and Fishing Day](#)

Traverse City Record Eagle  
September 28, 2021