

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

Approved by Michigan Wildlife Council on November 8, 2024

The Michigan Wildlife Council (MWC) is pleased to provide this semi-annual report to the Legislature of the State of Michigan.

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 wildlife conservation and to educate the general public about hunting, fishing, and trapping. The Michigan Wildlife Management Public Education Fund was established within 2013 PA 246 to support this mission and is derived by a \$1 surcharge on all Michigan base hunting and fishing licenses.

The MWC is entrusted with educating the public about the importance of wildlife conservation and its role in preserving Michigan's great outdoor heritage for future generations. All the people in Michigan benefit from the beautiful forests, waters, and wildlife, which is why great care is taken to protect and enhance these valuable assets. The MWC is dedicated to increasing public knowledge on how wildlife and Michigan's outdoors are scientifically managed and funded so that we can continue to enjoy them as we do today.

Since the submission of its first semi-annual report in May 2015, the MWC has been contracting with GÜD Marketing of Lansing to develop and produce a marketing campaign. Tactics include paid, earned, grassroots, and social media content strategically placed in the state throughout the year. These efforts have resulted in increased understanding among the public of the values of hunting, fishing, and the taking of game in Michigan. The work has also increased the levels of approval for hunting and fishing in Michigan.

GÜD Marketing has tested messaging concepts in the field using a specific survey made for this analysis. The survey measures how audiences react to the messaging and creative concepts. In addition, five focus-group sessions (a session included about five people who had to be invited and were recorded so their reactions can be studied) were held in southeast Michigan and Grand Rapids to explore reactions to and preferences for different messages through discussion and dialogue.

One of the studies this year was created to gauge reactions to images and messages. Each series began with a noncontroversial image and message pairing. Respondents were asked to rate the image and message separately on a 3-point acceptability scale:

- "I find nothing objectionable or distressing about this image/message."
- "This image/message is somewhat uncomfortable to me, but I'm OK with it being shown."
- "I strongly dislike and/or am upset by this image/message."

Respondents were shown progressively more direct/intense images and messages until they indicated that they found them upsetting, at which point they stopped seeing more intense content of that form.

That ending point represents the intensity of content that they would not be comfortable seeing in advertising or communications.

Respondents who made it through the entire progressions without finding any imagery distressing or upsetting were then asked how seeing the final, most intense image in an ad left them feeling. The last image in each message was a picture of a person with the deer they had harvested.

At a total sample level, relatively few Michiganders found any of the Wildlife Management images or messages strongly upsetting until the final, most intense pairing.

Imagery of animals and hunters walking with guns was largely not objected to, but images of a hunter pointing a gun or posing with their harvest led to much higher levels of discomfort. The messages had a similar tipping point; talking broadly about the role of hunters in wildlife population control was not controversial for most, but a larger group pushed back on the notion that hunters are actually protecting Michigan wildlife.

The argument that hunting protects Michigan wildlife was the most divisive message, although a majority didn't find anything objectionable about the message.

Güd Marketing developed messaging concepts for its campaign based on what was learned from the survey, focus groups, and baseline research. The creative concept direction was presented to the MWC at the February 21, 2024 meeting. Güd Marketing supplied samples of radio, outdoor, TV script/storyboard, website, and digital advertising to show how this campaign would grab the attention of the intended audience. Minor revisions were made to the creative direction based on MWC feedback. The creative concept direction and the year's media plan were both approved by the full MWC during the February 2024 meeting. The MWC also unanimously approved the marketing firm's continued scope of work through December 2024 and budget allocations for the 2024 year of the media campaign.

The MWC website ([HereForMiOutdoors.org](https://www.hereformioutdoors.org)) contains all content germane to the MWC's mission.

The current council includes:

Nick Buggia, (Chair) Mayville
Beth Gruden, Perrinton
Brent Pike, Grand Haven
Franklin Hayes, West Bloomfield
Daniel Ulfing, Munith
Dawn Levey, Elsie
Daniel Cooke, Northville
Jon Spieles, (Treasurer) Lansing

In closing, the MWC appreciates the Legislature's continued support and for the opportunity to report on council activities since October 2023.

Respectfully,



Nicholas Buggia
Michigan Wildlife Council

In compliance with Section 43532b(18)(b) of PA 451 of 1994, the MWC provides the following summary of Fiscal Year 2024 expenditures for the Michigan Wildlife Management Public Education Subaccount that was created within the Game and Fish Protection Account.

Fiscal Year 2024 Expenditures for the Michigan Wildlife Council

(October 1, 2023 through September 30, 2024)

Expenditure Description	Amount
Research/Marketing/Creative/Media	\$1,842,400
<u>Administrative</u>	<u>\$2,600</u>
Total Expenditures	\$1,845,000