



# Conservation Coalition

## *2015-2016 Priorities*

### MEMORANDUM

September 29, 2014

Director Keith Creagh  
Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Executive Division  
P.O. Box 30028  
Lansing, MI 48909

Re: Michigan Conservation Coalition Priorities

Dear Director Creagh,

The Conservation Coalition represents many diverse voices of the sporting and conservation community, but we share a unified and common commitment to advancing Michigan's outdoor heritage through science-based wildlife and fisheries management and wise use of our state's natural resources. This coalition has worked hard to ensure additional funding for conservation through the adoption of the recent license restructuring. Additionally, we have committed substantial time, effort, and resources to ensuring the integrity of science-based natural resources management decision making.

The Conservation Coalition recognizes that our fisheries and wildlife resources are economic drivers in this state; according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in 2011 hunters spent \$33.7 billion nationwide, while anglers spent \$41.8 billion. Michigan consistently has ranked high among other states in spending—our hunters, anglers, and trappers spend \$9.4 million EVERY DAY or \$3.4 billion annually. The sportsmen and women of the state ARE economic drivers. Our concerns are of equal value to those who use our natural resources for extractive purposes or who visit the state parks. Accordingly, we have developed priorities under the following five categories, as well as supporting funding to achieve these priorities:

- Habitat
- Access;
- Protecting our Heritage;
- Recruitment and Retention; and
- Invasive Species and Emerging Threats

Within our community and among members of the coalition, there is consent that these five areas demand the urgent attention of the Quality of Life group. We appreciate your written response to these priorities and ask that you identify any issues or items contained which may require additional clarification from us. Those inquiries may be directed to Amy Trotter at Michigan United Conservation Clubs at 517-346-6484. Additionally, we request a written update on the priorities communicated to you in our January 4, 2013 letter.

Thank you.

## The Michigan Conservation Coalition

- **Gildo Tori, Ducks Unlimited, Great Lakes/Atlantic Regional Office**
- **Jim Schramm, Great Lakes Council, Federation of Fly Fishers**
- **Frank Krist, Hammond Bay Area Anglers Association**
- **Tim Dusterwinkle, Michigan Bear Hunters Association**
- **Dean Hall, Michigan Bow Hunters Association**
- **Terry Walsh, Michigan Charter Boat Association**
- **Mike Thorman, Michigan Hunting Dog Federation**
- **Michael Goyne, Michigan Quality Deer Management Association**
- **Arminda Koch, Michigan Resource Stewards**
- **Jim Wale, Michigan State United Coon Hunters**
- **Dale Hendershot, Michigan Trappers and Predator Callers Association**
- **Bryan Burroughs, Michigan Trout Unlimited**
- **Dan Eichinger, Michigan United Conservation Clubs**
- **Jim Maturen, Michigan Wild Turkey Hunters Association**
- **Tony Snyder, National Wildlife Turkey Federation, Michigan State Chapter**
- **Jason Dinsmore, National Wildlife Federation, Great Lakes Office**
- **Bill Vander Zouwen, Pheasants Forever**
- **Eric Ellis, Ruffed Grouse Society/American Woodcock Society**
- **Jim Hammill, SCI-Northwoods Chapter**
- **Jim DeClerck, Saginaw Field and Stream**
- **Brian Siess, Shiawassee Flats Citizens and Hunters Association**
- **Brenda Archambo, Sturgeon for Tomorrow**
- **Carol Rose, Upper Black Watershed Council**
- **George Lindquist, U.P. Whitetails of Marquette County**

CC: Director Dan Wyant, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality  
Chairman J.R. Richardson, Natural Resources Commission  
Deputy Director Bill Moritz, Department of Natural Resources  
Chief of Staff Dennis Knapp, Department of Natural Resources

**Conservation Coalition’s 2015-2016 Administrative, Budget and Legislative Priorities  
(by Coalition priorities, in no particular order at this time):**

**Natural Resources Funding Supporting Each Coalition Priority**

- Support and expand transparency in the use of hunting and fishing license dollars and adherence to the original outcomes proposed in 2013, including promoting partnerships through habitat grants, law enforcement, scientific research, and adaptive management

**Access**

- Public Land Strategy
  - Approval of the strategy and drafting the implementation plan this fall, which includes maintaining the DNR’s existing authority to buy and sell land.
  - Encourage the DNR to facilitate a work group to improve the transparency on the land transaction process, with the following goals:
    - More advanced public notification of applications for major land exchanges or sales and increased time for public comment before a decision is made.
    - Clarifying criteria for declaring land “surplus”
    - Reviewing existing land transaction application fee revenue and the effort that goes into application and field reviews.
- The Future of Revenues and Royalties from State-Owned Non Renewable Resources (Oil, Gas, Mineral)
  - Supporting only minimal reforms to maintain the integrity and original purpose of the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, which may include giving more flexibility to the Trust Fund Board to decide the proportion spent on acquisition and development
  - Ensure that royalties from oil, gas, and other mineral development on public lands continue to be captured for the development of outdoor recreation and conservation of natural resources.
- Commercial Forest Act (CFA) lands
  - Encourage the State of Michigan to actively enforce violations of the Commercial Forest Act with regards to restricting public access.
  - Encourage motorized access to Commercial Forest Act Lands and maintaining existing access and allowable activities (baiting, blinds, existing motorized access) on these lands. The Coalition is open to participating in continued dialogue with the DNR and CFA landowners.
  - Supports the technical change to clarify that trapping is an allowable activity on CFA lands under existing public land regulations

**Habitat**

- Forest Management and Wildlife Habitat
  - Protect and enhance forest management techniques for wildlife habitat, such as clear cutting, prescribed burning, and hinge cutting where appropriate on both public and private lands
  - Prioritize featured species wildlife habitat among state forest management goals and land transactions, including increasing the acquisition, protection, and enhancement of deer winter complexes, including implementing recommendations from the newly formed NRC U.P. Habitat Work Group and others.

- Continue to monitor and evaluate the use of deer range improvement program funding on state and private lands
- Continue to prioritize wildlife habitat maintenance and development on Game and Fish Fund purchased lands and document and communicate the outcomes.
- Coordinate with other agencies and non-governmental organizations to leverage Farm Bill, Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA) and other federal funding in Michigan for fish and wildlife habitat development
- Support the new Wildlife Management Cooperative Coordinator to assist private landowners in working together to achieve habitat and wildlife management goals
- Support the intent of the EPA's Clean Water Act rulemaking to extend protections to critical areas for fisheries and wildlife habitat and any subsequent updates needed within Michigan's statute to mirror these protections, while maintaining Michigan's unique state authority

### **Protecting our Heritage**

- Protect the Natural Resources Commission's authority to add to the game species list and protecting the integrity of Proposal G of 1996 by ensuring that decisions about the manner and method of take continue to reside with the NRC.
- Pursue regulation and/or licensure of commercial guides (hunting, fishing, trapping guides in Michigan and wildlife watching tour guides on public lands).
- Leverage and magnify the Michigan Wildlife Council marketing and promotions to help educate non-hunters of the value that sportsmen and women provide to Michigan's economy and natural resources
- Documentation of the value of hunting, fishing, and trapping and natural resources management through a gap analysis of information and identifying funding sources for baseline and consistent social and economic data collection on the economic impacts of hunting, fishing, and trapping and natural resources management
- Protect the integrity of our outdoor heritage by enforcing or supporting new laws against using existing or future technology that is a clear violation of fair chase, such as the use of drones for hunting.
- Work with a broad coalition (within and outside of conservation) to change Michigan's initiative and referendum process to require geographic distribution for signatures, enhance the integrity of the ballot process, and reduce misleading tactics for ballot initiatives.

### **Recruitment and Retention**

- Ensure that Michigan laws and regulations are protective of law-abiding hunters, and that there is adequate enforcement of hunter and angler harassment laws and cyber bullying/stalking laws that take into account new technology and social media
- Mentored Youth Hunting Program: Expansion of public land firearm hunting for youth under 14
- Evaluate the existing programs designed to increase recruitment and retention and use license sale data and other sources of research to ensure these efforts are effective and cost-efficient (i.e. are hunter's safety participants buying licenses?).
- Continue to evaluate the impact of the new license restructuring on youth participation and adopt discounts for youth licenses if participation drops more than 7% (the expected resistance) since enacted.

### **Invasive Species and Emerging Threats**

- Although the Quality of Life Invasive Species Initiative has not yet begun, we call for continued general fund support of a multi-agency approach to prevent, combat, and manage terrestrial and aquatic invasive species.
- The Coalition will help to leverage and expand upon state agency communication messages concerning education of the public on reducing the pathways for aquatic and terrestrial invasive species.
- Increase enforcement of existing laws on lawn fertilizer application (required to be based on need identified in soil testing) because overuse and runoff are the leading causes of algal blooms and invasive weed growth.
- Support initiatives to provide financial and technical support to reduce the threats from municipal and agricultural sources that also lead to algal blooms and invasive weed growth.
- Increase enforcement of current laws and intensify outreach and educational efforts in relation to moving firewood to prevent the continued spread of invasive species.