

## Michigan Wildlife Council

### MINUTES May 21, 2019

A regular meeting of the Michigan Wildlife Council was held Tuesday, May 21, 2019, at UrbanBeat, 1213 Turner Street, Lansing, Michigan.

#### Present for the Michigan Wildlife Council

Matt Pedigo  
Ed Roy  
Kristin Phillips  
Henry Stancato  
Beth Gruden  
Nick Buggia  
Carol Rose

#### Excused Absence

Jim Hammill  
Jeff Poet

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#### Call to Order

Chairman **Pedigo** called the meeting of the Michigan Wildlife Council (MWC) to order at 9:52 a.m.

#### Approval of Agenda

Chairman **Pedigo** reviewed the agenda and called for discussion. There was no discussion. **Rose** made a motion that the agenda be approved as presented. **Gruden** supported the motion, and the agenda was approved by unanimous vote (7-0).

#### Approval of March 7, 2019, Minutes

**Pedigo** called for discussion to be held on the minutes of the March 7, 2019, MWC meeting. **Phillips** did not receive any changes to the minutes she had emailed to the council. There was no discussion. **Roy** made a motion that the minutes be approved as submitted. **Rose** seconded, and the minutes were approved by unanimous vote (7-0).

#### GüD Marketing Campaign Update

**Emmie Musser**, GüD Marketing media director, opened the meeting reflecting on the last three years of the public education campaign. While approval of hunting and fishing in Michigan is high (over 80%), approval is conditional due to lack of knowledge and understanding. Through increasing understanding, the campaign can strengthen support for hunting and fishing in Michigan. Musser then provided an overview of the creative assets currently in market, including highway and side street billboards, bike share signage and digital and social media

ads. To best convey how the campaign plays out in the world, Musser shared a video illustrating how the campaign may interact with people's daily lives, e.g., reading an article during breakfast, seeing a billboard while driving, listening to a radio ad on Pandora during a morning run, and seeing a commercial while watching evening television. Musser then shared how an individual may interact with the campaign online. The campaign has an approach that's less ad-like and more education-based, allowing the effort to reach each individual based on their own unique online behaviors.

**Andrea Ness**, GÜD Marketing outreach and engagement director, shared the new Michigan Wildlife Council campaign website. The new website is mobile-first, fast-loading, more accessible, visually impressive, and further emphasizes the campaign's strong content. The new website has been visited by 17,912 new unique users, and time spent on the site had increased by 62% since its launch on May 1, 2019. Visitors are primarily from Detroit, Ann Arbor, and Grand Rapids.

**Chelsea Maupin**, GÜD Marketing research manager, shared an overview of trending topics and issues, and potential opportunities for the campaign to contribute to the conversation. As of Dec. 31, 2019, the campaign had accumulated over 816 million impressions and over 17 million engagements. It has also produced 82 media interviews and 84 content articles, contributing largely to the "wildlife conservation" dialog. GÜD Marketing continues to capitalize on opportunities to share the campaign's key messages and correcting misinformation where possible. Prior to covering a potential topic, the team asks:

- Is this issue on the target audience's radar?
- Is there a story to tell that will reinforce the MWC's goals and communications?
- What are the risks of linking the MWC to this issue?

**Maupin** provided Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) as an emerging topic that the team is actively evaluating. Currently, CWD is not a widely covered topic in relation to other emerging topics such as per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). Potential opportunities in covering CWD include highlighting management practices related to disease prevention and showcasing hunting as a management tool. However, there are still risks in joining this conversation, including ever-evolving information and best practice for management, potential loss of control of the message (counternarratives) and the use of general funds for the management of CWD, as it complicates the funding message the campaign has focused on.

The council agreed CWD is an important topic that will need to be discussed with the campaign's target audience at some future date. When the topic is covered, potentially via a content marketing article, it will need to be written to effectively frame hunting as a tool of wildlife management.

**Maupin** then provided an overview of relevant campaigns to the Michigan Wildlife Council. These campaigns are built on foundations similar to the council's campaign (e.g., emotional connections, future generations, appreciation of the outdoors and increasing awareness, interest, participation and advocacy). Campaigns covered include, the Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation's "Take Me Fishing" campaign, the U.S. Forest Service's "Discover the Forest" campaign, the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies' "Making it Last" campaign and the Colorado Wildlife Council's evolving campaign.

**Jill Holden**, GÜD Marketing strategic planning director, reflected on the five-year communications strategy and project goals for the MWC campaign. In 2016, the campaign sought to attract and inform audiences, and established connections with the outdoors. In 2017, the campaign continued to attract and inform audiences, and introduced wildlife management broadly. In 2018, the campaign continued to attract and inform while beginning to engage audiences and introduce funding messaging. Now in 2019, the campaign will begin to encourage audiences to participate in the campaign while continuing to emphasize the funding message in a more direct, factual manner.

**Mike Nowlin**, GÜD Marketing senior public relations manager, introduced a grassroots and public relations strategy that will begin with a proclamation from the governor recognizing July as Michigan Wildlife Month. To follow this announcement, the “Michigan Wildlife Tour” will kick off on July 6, at a Detroit Tigers game, inviting the community to participate in a community photo mosaic art piece. This effort will recognize the efforts of conservation organizations across the state and encourage them to participate in the celebration.

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The meeting was adjourned for lunch at 12:35 p.m. and reconvened at 12:45 p.m. All council members present prior to lunch were present after lunch.

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### **Research Evaluation**

**Stancato** summarized why the MWC had commissioned the third-party research evaluation. **Stancato** recalled that **Hammill** had moved for a third-party evaluation of the GÜD Marketing Campaign survey because **Hammill** had become aware that there was skepticism about the process shown in the survey data. **Stancato** also cited comments received during a meeting called by Senator Bumstead with his staff, the MWC, and stakeholders. At that meeting, it was suggested there was a need for:

- More aggressive messaging because the images were not effective.
- More aggressive communication with legislators because they do not know about us.
- More messaging to the constituents (those who pay).

No decisions were made about these needs or advice given about refining the profile of the target population, what should be measured, or specific suggestions for improving the Request for Proposal (RFP).

There was a general agreement that southeast Michigan is the key to the marketing effort.

### **Research on GÜD Marketing Surveys**

The research evaluation findings were presented by teleconference with **Loren Chase, Ph.D.**, Chase and Chase Consulting. He started by explaining the roles of the various partners that participated in the research evaluation.

#### **Roles in marketing**

Michigan Wildlife Council – Client

Güd Marketing – Marketing Firm  
Morpace – Data Collection and Statistics  
Dynata – Online Panel  
UGAM – Survey Programming  
Adapt – Verbatim Coding

Dr. Chase reviewed the study design comparing the 2015, 2017, and 2018 surveys.

All scientific research has inherent weaknesses or limitations regardless of field of study, the reputation of the primary researcher, the quality of the research firm, or size of the research budget. Reputable researchers reduce those weaknesses to the extent possible, discuss the weaknesses of the study they cannot eliminate, and avoid making assertions the data does not support.

There are several positive qualities of the MWC research approach. Conducting baseline data to evaluate attitudes prior to the start of a campaign is excellent. Chase and Chase Consulting also believes the psychometric properties of the questions on the survey (the ability of the questions to accurately measure the respondent's attitudes) to be excellent. The sample size was adequate to discuss the population within a reasonable degree of certainty. Most of the efforts to weight the known population demographics were notable.

Despite these commendable adherences to industry standards, there are points of concern that prevent the ability to generalize the MWC research findings to the Michigan population. Namely, the panel used in the MWC survey is a non-probabilistic, unscientific sample. There is little empirical or theoretical evidence that non-probabilistic online panels can be quota-adjusted, or post-hoc weighted, to representatively reflect the larger underlying population. Further, there are several methodological choices that confound direct comparisons between years of the MWC data. The changes that likely had the largest impact were the absence of a quota for hunters in the 2015 baseline assessment and the variability in the survey weighting strategies. Without a 15 percent hunter quota in the 2015 MWC survey, the results of the baseline will be more reflective of hunter's attitudes, as it over-represents this constituency.

Further, the 2015 MWC data incorrectly treated the age groupings. In setting quota levels for the 18-34-year-old group, the quota was based on the percentage of Michiganders under age 35, erroneously including minors in the calculation. True 18-34-year-olds account for 28.7 percent of the adult Michigan population, and the quota should have been set near that value. However, the quota was set at 42 percent, which is reflective of the Michigan population under age 35, inclusive of minors. This issue could have been improved using weighting strategies; however, the mean ages for the 2015, 2017, and 2018 MWC survey were 41, 46, and 47 respectively, suggesting this issue was not adequately addressed. Despite these weaknesses, there are several steps the MWC could take to maximize the utility of the data that has already been collected.

Dr. Chase's recommendations include:

- 1) Running a parallel study that uses probabilistic, scientific sampling so that a "correction factor" could be calculated to adjust the findings of the MWCS.

- 2) A stand-alone study could be done using probabilistic, scientific sampling that could be used to get an accurate depiction of Michiganders opinions regarding the campaign at the present time (but does not provide evaluation against past years' data).
- 3) The data analysis could be performed again, using the current MWC data but utilizing more sophisticated weighting to correct for the flawed age and hunting quotas in the 2015 baseline. This approach allows for a comparison between versions. Although the estimates may still not be reflective of the Michigan population, the relative changes between the years may be informative of the impact the campaign is having on Michiganders and their perceptions on hunting and fishing.

The council, Dr. Chase, GÜd Marketing, and members of the public (Mike Leonard, Safari Club International) engaged in a discussion regarding the results of the survey evaluation. There were questions about the availability of data for the basis of the survey. Data about panel size was not available because Dynata would not release the proprietary information. The spectrum of the research quality was also deliberated. GÜd Marketing explained that online panels have been improving in quality over time and with improvements to technology more people have access to online panels. With response rates declining significantly in probability samples, concerns about representation are not limited to online panel samples. The benefits of using online panels often outweigh their shortcomings. Many of the larger panels, such as Dynata's consumer panel, are built and managed by trained survey methodologists and employ additional quality efforts which have made online panels a respectable source for surveys.

There was discussion about the differences between academic research and market research.

GÜd Marketing explained standard academic research practices may not give due weight to practical considerations such as cost and research timeline. When designing research in practice, methodological considerations must be balanced against cost and timing to come up with an approach that is fit for the purpose and delivers timely on the key goals of the research study, which in the case of the MWC research appears to be the ability to track changes in sentiment of Michigan residents over time.

At the onset of the Michigan Wildlife Council, the research was intended to measure the campaign's progress, drive improvements in the communications strategy for the following year and provide an objective measure of understanding by the general public on topics related to hunting and fishing. Research was needed within a short window of time and within a budget. Probabilistic methodologies such as a mail survey or a phone survey have estimated outside research vendor costs between double and triple the existing research costs. Additionally, more time—potentially several months—would be required such methodologies, which makes it difficult to measure perceptions at a point in time.

### **Public Comment**

Chairman **Pedigo** called for public comment, but there was none.

**Phillips** asked if the decision on pursuing any of the recommendations had to be made at this meeting. There was discussion about postponing the decision until all council members could weigh in and we might find out what type of surveys other similar campaigns have used.

(Colorado has moved to using an online survey. They used a phone survey through 2013, then moved to a panel survey.) It was decided to postpone the decision to a future meeting.

*Councilman Nick Buggia left the meeting for another commitment.*

### **Treasurer's Report**

Treasurer **Phillips** gave an overview of the presented written draft financial report for October 1, 2018 through March 31, 2019, noting a prior fiscal year balance of \$1,251,256, current fiscal year revenue of \$1,318,440, current fiscal year revenue of \$1,318,440, and expenditures of \$329,367. It was also noted that June through August is when the most media buys take place.

**Rose** made the motion to accept the financial report as presented. **Roy** seconded the motion. **Pedigo** asked for questions or comments. There being none, the report was approved by unanimous vote (6-0).


### **Council Reports and New Business**

**Phillips** reviewed with the MWC the State of Michigan's purchasing and RFP process. She asked for the MWC members to serve on the evaluation committee. It was recommended that **Roy, Buggia**, and possibly **Hammill** be on that committee. **Stancatto** agreed to be on the committee if he was available. The initial three-day review process will occur in Traverse City.

**Mary Ostrowski, DTMB**, commented that her role is to make sure the process is unbiased, fair, and follows the State process.

### **Adjournment**

**Rose** made the motion to adjourn, seconded by **Phillips**, and the motion to adjourn was approved by unanimous vote (6-0). The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

APPROVED: Date 8/20/2019  
  
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Matt Pedigo, Chairperson  
Michigan Wildlife Council  
