

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 May 7, 2024.

The following is the semiannual report to be submitted to the Legislature documenting activities of the Michigan Wildlife Council (MWC or Council) for the first half of Fiscal Year (FY) 2024.

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. This includes educating the public that hunting and fishing are:

- Necessary for conservation and management of Michigan's natural resources.
- A valued and integral part of the cultural heritage of this state.
- An important part of the state's economy.

The mission is funded by a \$1 surcharge on all Michigan base hunting and fishing licenses.

The MWC has contracted with GÜD Marketing of Lansing to develop and implement a 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. Each year, a subsequent survey is used to measure changes in understanding and to refine the objectives for the next year. The campaign for 2023 ran until November 30, 2023, and was focused on delivering key campaign messages to the target audience (ages 18-34, female, and located in the Southern Lower Peninsula). The communications strategy for this year's message was to educate Michiganders about wildlife management and build awareness of shared experiences made possible by hunting and fishing.

The tactics used for the 2023 campaign include outdoor, social media, digital video, earned media, social influencers, digital audio, and sponsorships. During the annual survey, the ads with Jackie and Annette were studied by the Council to see how effective they were. The audience really liked Annette (very positive and upbeat), but they thought Jackie (very cynical) was a little disconnected with the overall theme of protecting nature. (Note: Jackie's attitude will be changed to reflect someone that is more interested in wildlife.) These two characters work well together to make connections with the audience about wildlife management. The 30 second digital video ads on TV and YouTube have brought in 5.9 million impressions, 4.6 thousand clicks, and 4.4 million completed video views.

Several points about the campaign were gleaned from the Qualitative Research by GÜD Marketing this year:

- Whenever possible, feature the animals that benefit from conservation efforts.
  - Including the beneficiary animals in an ad helps to drive home the main message.
- Staging ads in outdoor, natural spaces (rather than indoors) helps to reinforce how the environment benefits from conservation efforts.
  - The video ads that took place outside all drew praise for showing the types of natural areas that benefit from conservation work.
- The "Beauty in the Balance" tagline can be a unifying cry for the campaign.
  - The overall feeling was that the need for balance should involve humans only so far as necessary to allow nature to thrive.

One area was singled out for improvement:

- The setup/narrative portions of some ads took too long to establish their message, leading to a loss of interest.
  - Driving the main message home early and clearly helped to maintain viewer interest.

The council continued to partner with the Mike Avery Radio show and the Michigan Out-of-Doors Magazine to promote wildlife and conservation messaging.

A good example of “earned media” was set in July of this year for Wildlife Conservation month. The MWC sent out a press release naming the “Top 10” list of saved species that resulted in seven stories across Michigan by some of the state’s largest news outlets. Coverage reached over 2.7 million individuals.

The MWC Chairman, Nick Buggia, explained that the Council released its first ever “Top 10” list of recovered species as part of an ongoing educational campaign to raise public awareness about the prominent role hunting and fishing play in conservation and wildlife management. The “Top 10” list coincides with the 10-year anniversary of the passage of legislation that established the Michigan Wildlife Council.

The MWC “Top 10” recovered species are listed below:

1. **Kirtland’s Warbler** – Wildlife management practices have increased the population to over 2,000 nesting pairs, more than double the recovery goal.
2. **Moose** – More than a century ago, moose no longer existed in the Lower Peninsula and only a handful remained in the Upper Peninsula (U.P.). Today, the DNR estimates there are as many as 500 or so in the U.P.
3. **Pheasant** – The DNR has partnered with Michigan Pheasants Forever and other conservation organizations to conserve and increase the population of pheasants.
4. **Osprey** – After toxic insecticides, loss of breeding grounds, and poaching threatened the osprey population’s survival, few wildlife restoration programs have been as successful.
5. **Lake Sturgeon** – The fish are thriving after man-made spawning reefs were constructed in the Detroit/St. Clair River system, where half of the state’s sturgeon population lives.
6. **Wild Turkey** – Careful habitat management and strategic relocation efforts have led to population increases in Michigan from 2,000 in 1960 to over 200,000 today.
7. **Ruffed Grouse** – The DNR and the Ruffed Grouse Society of Michigan have partnered to restore thousands of acres of aspen forests and plant fruit-bearing trees like crabapples and hawthorns to provide food sources.
8. **Elk** – In 2019, the elk population in Michigan was estimated at nearly 1,200, exceeding population goals of 500-900.
9. **Muskellunge** – From overfished to thriving, the muskie population in Michigan has risen substantially. In 2016, the DNR stocked more than 25,000 muskies in Michigan waters.
10. **Wood Duck** – Conserving wooded wetlands, establishing appropriate hunting regulations, and placing artificial nesting boxes in wetland habitats have brought the species back from near extinction.

In reflection, the first deer license was sold in 1891. At 50 cents each, 14,477 residents purchased a license that year. In 2022, according to the DNR statistics, 586,323 people purchased a license to hunt deer in Michigan. Today, proceeds from licensing provide more than \$65 million for conservation, habitat restoration, and protection from invasive species.

“All Michiganders benefit because the health and vigor of Michigan’s outdoors, natural habitats and wildlife populations directly corresponds to the money generated from hunting and fishing license sales,” Buggia said. “Michigan’s management of the state’s wildlife and other natural resources relies

primarily on the revenue from hunting and fishing license sales, not taxes.”

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 current council includes:

Nick Buggia, (Chair) Mayville  
Jason Garvon, Brimley  
Ed Roy, Traverse City  
Brent Pike, Grand Haven  
Beth Gruden, Perrinton  
Franklin Hayes, West Bloomfield  
Jon Spieles (Treasurer, DNR director’s designee)

The MWC appreciates the Legislature’s continued support and the opportunity to report on its activities in Fiscal Year 2024.

Respectfully,

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

Nicholas 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 2024 expenditures for the Michigan Wildlife Management Public Education Subaccount that was created within the Game and Fish Protection Account.

**Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Expenditures for the Michigan Wildlife Council**  
(October 1, 2023 through March 31, 2024)

<b>Expenditure Description</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Research/Marketing/Creative/Media	\$703,100
<u>Administrative</u>	<u>\$800</u>
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$703,900</b>

## Michigan Wildlife Council Media Articles

May 2023 – April 2024

### Media Articles

[MI Wildlife Council releases its top 10 success stories on its tenth anniversary](#)

Michigan Radio

July 3, 2023

[Gov. Whitmer proclaims July as Michigan Wildlife Conservation Month](#)

Mid-Michigan NOW/News Channel 3

July 3, 2023

[Mich. Wildlife Council marks a decade, releases top 10 successes](#)

Interlochen Public Radio

July 3, 2023

[Michigan's top ten wildlife conservation success stories](#)

Oakland County Times

July 3, 2023

[Michigan Wildlife Council issues first ever top ten success stories](#)

WCMU Public Radio

July 5, 2023

[Here's how Dequindre Cut murals are highlighting Michigan's urban wildlife in Detroit](#)

Click On Detroit

August 21, 2023

[Muralist pays colorful tribute to Michigan wildlife along Dequindre Cut](#)

Detroit Metro Times

August 22, 2023

[Conservation Benefits All Michiganders](#)

August 10, 2023

[Colorful 'Big Reveal' highlights weekend's Detroit Harvest Fest](#)

Social House News

October 9, 2023

[New Dequindre Cut wildlife mural carries conservation message](#)

Metro Times

October 19, 2023

[Preserving Michigan's Natural Heritage: The Role of the Michigan Wildlife Council](#)

Michigan Chronicle

October 19, 2023

[Michigan's deer hunting experts see hopeful signs amid declining license sales](#)

Detroit News

November 14, 2023

[Hunting deer in Michigan: the history, statistics and benefits](#)

Northern MI 9&10  
November 14, 2023

[Hunting and fishing license numbers show steady growth in 2023](#)

C & C Newspapers  
November 14, 2023

[Deer hunters are the 'ultimate teammate' for all outdoor lovers](#)

Metro Times  
November 15, 2023

[Hunting, fishing license purchases hold steady](#)

Oceana's Herald-Journal  
November 16, 2023

[Venison donations to food banks up despite fewer hunters](#)

The Daily News  
November 27, 2023

[Salmon in the Classroom: A Unique Wildlife Education Initiative, Fueled by Michigan Wildlife Council, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, and Real Times Media](#)

Michigan Chronicle  
February 22, 2024