

**Michigan Wildlife Council  
Minutes  
May 27, 2025**

The Michigan Wildlife Council (MWC) met at the Flynn Pavilion Belle Isle, 4435 Muse Road, Detroit, Michigan 48207.

**Attendees**

Jason Garvon, Chair, MWC  
Beth Gruden, Vice Chair, MWC  
Daniel Ulfig, MWC  
Dawn Levey, MWC  
Jon Spieles, Department of Natural  
Resources (DNR)/MWC  
Franklin Hayes, MWC  
Brent Pike, MWC  
Daniel Cooke, MWC  
Rose Campbell-Gill, DNR

Jason Fetterman, Fusion92  
Nick Petrusha, Fusion92  
Samantha Labadie, Fusion92  
Michael Child, Fusion 92  
Stacey Gizinski, Fusion 92  
Nick Buggia, former MWC  
Russ Mason, Nimrod

*Absent: None*

*Virtual: None*

**Beth Gruden** called the meeting to order at 10:20 a.m.

Introductions were made by all present.

**Gruden** made a motion to approve the agenda.

**Garvon** seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

**Dan Cooke** made a motion to approve with corrections and Beth seconded the MWC meeting minutes from April 10, 2025. The MWC meeting minutes were approved unanimously.

**Nominations**

Jason Garvon was nominated as Chair, Dan Cooke was nominated as Secretary, Beth Gruden will remain Vice Chair and Jon Spieles will remain as Treasurer. **Levey** made a motion to approve the nominations, **Spieles** seconded and all were approved unanimously.

**Review and approval of updates for Protecting Michigan's Legacy Campaign  
Communications Plan**

**Samantha LaRue, Fusion92** outlined what they will be presenting starting with an updated media recommendation, the updated creative pieces and proposed production approach. Starting with the media plan LaRue stated Fusion92 has taken a deeper look into the plan and put real timing against it and real deliverables and right sized it to the budget that was given.

**Michael Child, Fusion 92** presented Fusion92 MWC 2024 research study of the lower scoring audiences with a lesser understanding of the benefits provided from hunting, fishing and trapping. Where they're at, who they are and what they're doing. Five points were identified. (1) Geographically the lower peninsula (Metro Detroit, Southeast and Central). Focus 100% of media impressions within cities and surrounding suburbs of the highest population centers in

the lower half of the state. (2) Audience age and (3) activities. The recommendation is ages 18-44 and cities, suburbs and outdoor enthusiast. Will be suppressing anglers, trappers and hunters. The focus will be on non-hunter and fishing activities. The remaining two targeted groups is (4) women and (5) African American/Black. Most of the media dollars will be on the age group 18-44 city/suburbs non-hunters and fishers. A smaller percentage of funding will be designated for the outdoor enthusiasts who are already advocates for the outdoors but are not hunters and fishers.

**Buggia** commented that Gud Marketing did a good job of keeping us aware of the correct terminology to describe our audience. In the past the audience may have been referred to as African Americans, blacks, black Michiganders; women instead of females, etc. He asked that Fusion92 keep the council abreast of whatever terms they're using.

**Spieles** asked does outdoor enthusiasts include hunters and fishers. Michael stated they are suppressed. Samantha stated outdoor enthusiasts for this study is like your campers and hikers, not specific hunters and fishers.

### **Design Plan**

**Michael Child, Fusion 92** spoke on their plan design. He showed an infographic of their strategic approach: building awareness, digital forward, high impact activations and effective cross channel frequency. The agency's recommendation is to spend the money where people spend their time which is mostly online. Social media channels: across Facebook, Instagram and snapchat. Recommended channel mix. Social media (\$140,000 - 22%), streaming tv/video (\$260,000 - 41%), YouTube (\$138,543 - 22%), OOH (\$77,157 - 12%) and Mike Avery outdoors (\$15,000 - 2%).

**Spieles** asked has the budget mix changed since the first one that was purposed. Has it shifted? Samantha responded it has shifted a little. Because some funds had to be given back to fund Gud's activities for January – May and that money came out of media.

**Garvon** asked if the tv/streaming will be more dollars. Micheal said typical it is, but you're getting more attentiveness and longer duration from it.

**Ulfig** asked what OOH mean. Michael said out of home.

Social media will be the biggest driver, 91% uses it. Targeting a younger generation. Plan impressions 11.2 M target.

Streaming TV/Video 93% usage. Targeted across large networks including sites that are diversity and minority owned. Plan impressions 16.7 M target.

YouTube 63%. Targeting people that are searching for nature related topics. Plan impressions 12.1 M target.

Out of Home Recommendation 59%. Michigan residents that spend time up north. Plan impressions 12.1 M target. Focused on boards east or south.

**Ulfig** asked if Fusion92 has worked with people in the past that's used these boards. Michael stated yes, they have a relationship with these vendors.

**Ulfig** asked on the streaming tv/video recommendations slide, if the bottom list of streaming

examples were placed there because it's suspected to have the lowest activity. Michael stated no, the separation was just to show the environments that the videos run on.

**Ulfig** asked what is Pitchfork. Michael stated it's a news and entertainment website.

### **Owned Media Recommendation**

**Samantha Labadie, Fusion 92** discussed the Owned Media plan. The recommendation is to continue to do what we're doing with Gud. Fusion92 would like to align on 5 post per month. Organic social (Facebook and Instagram) five posts per month. Newsletter (email) one per quarter.

Content themes:

Conservation in Action

Impact of Outdoor Recreation

Conservation Education and Awareness

Community Connection and Engagement

Funding and Policy Transparency

Fusion 92 is looking for the council to let them know about things that come up in the community so they can target them.

**Spieles** asked when will the actual transition from Gud Marketing to Fusion92 take place. Samantha stated Fusion92 begins organic social with recycled content in second week of June and beginning paid social by August 1.

### **Earned media recommendations**

Reinforce campaign goals by aligning PR efforts with the campaign's overarching objectives and creative platform.

Fusion 92 recommend developing a seasonal pitch calendar and it would go through the end of the year. If a council person would like to be a spokesperson in a morning show or on tv Fusion 92 can provide training if necessary. Fusion92 will do a pitch calendar and follow-up with the council on it.

Samantha shared and discussed the Campaign flowchart – Plan to start in August and run through mid-November. Then start up again in March and go to June. The owned/earned media will stay constant all year.

**Gruden** asking if we're angling toward the older age group. The answer is no.

**Buggia** stated we normally hit November harder thinking about hunting season.

**Cooke** suggest shifting the timeframe to mid-August to November because people on the southeast side of the state are looking for things to do.

**Buggia** commented to look at July for the outdoor boards as people are traveling for camping or 4<sup>th</sup> of July vacationing.

**Spieles** favors moving the campaign season to later in November, because there will be a lot of media around deer season. November 20 would be ideal.

**Buggia** commented the billboard placement spot is good. He mentioned there was one by the Mackinaw bridge that's gotten a lot of views.

#### Next Steps

Fusion 92 would like full council approval of the revised media plan and owned/earned media strategy.

#### Up Next:

- Fusion92 to issue media authorizations and secure Paid Media according to plan
- Council to identify key milestones/activities for the remainder of CY for content planning
- Fusion92 to develop a pitch calendar and necessary materials for review
- Council to identify 1-2 spokespeople for Earned Media opportunities
- Fusion92 to begin a monthly Owned Media content calendar and creative
- Fusion92 to issue community management response and escalation guidelines.

**Ulfig** made a motion to approve the revised media plan and owned/earned media strategy, **Gruden** seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

#### **Protecting Michigan's Legacy Campaign Creative Refinement**

**Samantha Labadie, Fusion92** discussed the three creative learnings that were captured from the focus groups. The first was low awareness and relevance. She reiterated that the people that are being targeted don't know about hunting and fishing and doesn't realize how it impacts the state. The second was undervalued economic impact. It's not at the top of their mind, but once they were shown the \$95 million figure, it got their attention. And third, it drew curiosity around the use of the funding. They wanted to know about conservation, what it is and what it means.

That information provided some campaign learnings:

- Streamline the core message and call to action.
- Strengthening and differentiation visual branding.

**Jay Fetterman, Fusion 92** presented the deliverables designed to showcase both hunting and fishing activities to make sure they have a wide representation. The council viewed some 15 second videos (quiet videos - one captured fishing, one on duck hunting and one on deer hunting) all hitting on the relationship of people with nature. They also viewed some outdoor boards, several paid social platform videos Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat (animated, moving) and static and Fusion92 presented their example of the website reskin (landing page design). The 30 second radio spot was not shown. It will be shown to Mike Avery.

**Gruden** dismissed the group for lunch at 12:00 p.m. and called it back to order at 12:30 p.m.

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Public comment was asked after lunch at 12:30 p.m.

#### **Public Comment**

Russ Mason read a letter from the Nimrod Society concerning the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act 451 of 1994 that states it requires that one wildlife council member be “an individual with a media or marketing background, who is not an employee of the department, appointed by the governor with the advice and consent of the senate. The letter states it appears that the administration has missed or ignored this requirement. The Nimrod Society requests that this deficiency in the membership composition of the council be remedied as soon as possible and preferably with the next council member appointment.

Spieles referred the council to the website to look at Dan Cooke’s bio. On the council website it states he was appointed for having a media or marketing background. The council will look into having the roles stated at the beginning of the bios.

The council discussed a notification for canceled meetings. Russ Mason asked the council to consider consolidating web presence of the MWC.

### **Recommended Production Approach**

**Stacey Gizinski Fusion92**, outlined the recommended production approach.

Approach – They will use content capture, capturing motion and stills for the deliverables outlined.

Location – They want the location to fill cinematic. Would like to use drones.

Seasons – The plan is to make sure the hunting spots feel seasonally correct.

Animals – They would like to capture footage of animals.

Firearms – How do we approach this.

### **Production Partner criteria**

People with a passion for outdoors.

Wants a locally owned and operated person/company from Michigan. They came up with three options and vetted them:

Hudson artists – Director Anthony Garth, Michigan enthusiasts

FreeAge Production – Director Jim Toscano, fisherman

Local Boy Production – Director Soren Neilsen, fly fisherman

Jim Toscano of FreeAge Production is the recommendation. They felt his values connected close with the campaign. Working with Jim Toscano would be a Director of Photography, Danny Gianino and a photographer, Travis Goodin. Both are distinguished and well versed in their field.

### **Production Plan**

Approach - The tone is quiet, observational and emotionally grounded - allowing moments of stillness and subtle behavior to carry weight.

Number of Days/Tentative Locations – 2 shoot days.

- Pere Marquette River/Ludington Area — Fishing OTT/OLV + Stills
- Metamora — Duck Hunting & Deer Hunting OLV + Stills

Casting – Real people

Seasons - Though the narrative takes place in the fall, we’ll partially recreate the season through targeted art direction and styling.

Firearms - Hunter’s Creek Club member who will serve as our armorer and safety guide.

### **Casting Specs**

To maintain authenticity of the creative, they'll be casting real people, staying flexible in how roles are assigned. The goal is to reflect diversity where it naturally fit, without forcing it or compromising the believability of the story.

**Ulfig** recommended the DAC has a hunting and fishing club and would be a good place to look for cast.

**Buggia** stated it would be a good opportunity to reach out to some of the different groups we've been trying to connect with.

Fusion92 is open to any referrals the council may have for cast members.

### **Production Calendar**

Looking to start the production plan immediately. Will start casting in June. Around June 11 will start reviewing talent and getting the right matchups. Pre-production meeting will be June 18. The week of the June 23 will start shooting, then begin editing around June 27. Will be able to show the council rough cuts in mid-July. Then go through final approvals late July.

**Spieles** voiced concern of making sure the council was able to review casting specs before final approval of production.

Fusion92 would like council approval of the revised creative assets with the understanding that it can be reviewed.

**Ulfig** made a motion to approve creative concepts, **Gruden** seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

Fusion92 would like council approval on the recommended production approach.

**Gruden** made a motion to approve the recommended production approach and director, **Levey** seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

Fusion92 would like council approval on the recommended partner and casting specs.

**Garvon** made a motion to approve, **Levey** seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

Up Next:

- Fusion92 to award production and to issue production estimate.
- Fusion92 to complete production prep and schedule pre-production meeting (W/O 6/16).

There was a lot of conversation around who was on the MWC subcommittee and having them review the information before the final approval by the council.

**Gruden** asked who's all on the subcommittee: Jon Spieles, Beth Gruden, Jason Garvon, and Dan Cooke

**Upcoming Meeting dates:**

June 6 – Rose Lake  
July 24 – Rose Lake

### **New Business**

**Buggia** has committed to getting some presentations to some conservation groups. He offered to support the council by being interviewed by Mike Avery and to continue to complete conservation for the show. Fusion92 agreed to provide talking points for the council for these interviews. Buggia is also open to help fill in for any legislative meetings.

The next meeting will be held on June 6 at the Rose Lake Shooting Range with Gud Marketing.

**Gruden** made a motion to adjourn the meeting, **Cooke** seconded it, and the motion was passed unanimously. The MWC meeting was adjourned at 1:35 p.m.