



Michigan Wildlife Council

Meeting minutes

October 16, 2025
10:00 am - 2:00pm
Bay City State Park

3585 State Park Dr., Bay City MI 48706

Attendees

Jason Garvon, Chair, MWC
Dan Cooke, MWC
Dawn Levey, MWC
Dan Ulfig, MWC
Jon Spieles, Department of Natural
Resources (DNR)/MWC
Damion Frasier, MWC
Rose Campbell-Gill, DNR-MOD

Nick Petrusha, Fusion92
Jay Fetterman, Fusion92
Russ Mason, Nimrod
Bill Nowling, Fusion92

Absent: Beth Gruden, MWC; Franklin Hayes, MWC
Virtual: Marcee Wardell, DNR

Meeting Minutes

Garvon called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m.

Introductions were made by all present. New council member Damion Frasier was welcomed to the committee.

Garvon asked to amend the agenda with three new business items. One is MWC being on the stakeholders list for state forest road planning, the second is Michigan Senate bill 0358 on making the wild turkey as the Michigan State game bird and the third is a discussion regarding the MIOutdoors.com web address taking you to a sight called Dark Horse Brewery. **Levey** made a motion to approve MWC agenda with the added amendments. **Ulfig** seconded the motion. The agenda was approved unanimously.

Levey made a motion to approve MWC meeting minutes from July 24, 2025. **Frasier** seconded the motion. The meeting minutes were approved unanimously.

Media Training

Nick Petursha Fusion92 introduced **Bill Nowling Fusion92**, whose expertise is PR and media training to talk to the group and give some valuable pointers on media training and helping to communicate with broad audiences. The key points he wants to communicate are ways to build your confidence, how to deal with questions that are asked in an interview and being consistent, clear and repetitive with your core message.

Core Message: It should connect what you're doing as an organization. Identify your audience and target your message to them. The core message is that opportunity to make that connection with the

people that you want to talk to.

Key points to share in your message:

Hunters and anglers provide most of the financial support for conservation
Many wildlife species depend on hunting as a management tool
Hunting and fishing activities contribute to local economies and job creation

Pick Your Anchors:

Identify the 2 or 3 key priorities that's most important that you need to speak about in the interview and express it in your own words. You want to also make sure you're talking in ways that are personal, so it connects not only with the organization you represent but also with the target audience you're trying to reach.

Key Points:

Identify key priorities
Express in your own words
Make your message personal

Effective Bridging Techniques: Connecting what the reporter is asking about with what you want to talk about.

Acknowledge the question
Redirect to the Key Message
Expand Context

Effective Interview Formats:

TV Interview Essentials - Television interviews require short, powerful soundbites to quickly engage viewers and communicate the core message.

Radio Connection – Radio interviews use energetic tone and vivid language to build emotional connection with listeners.

Print and Online Depth – Allows for deeper context, statistics and quotable lines to provide broader impact.

Think about the medium you're in and based on that, you can structure your interview responses around it.

Ulfig ask if we got a question about camping fees, how would that be answered. **Spieles** answered that camping is the largest connection that we have in the agency to the outdoors but it doesn't pay for habitat for the wildlife and fish population. Hunting and fishing licenses pay for the conservation of wildlife. Camping fees are used to support campgrounds, park roads, infrastructure, power and sewer.

Mastering Media Interviews:

Anchor key messages
Showcase strong funding support
Emphasize broad community benefits

Handling Tough Questions:

Acknowledge and pivot – Acknowledge the tough questions and pivot toward your key message.

Stay Calm Under Pressure – Stay composed even though the question is challenging.

Avoid Negative Language – Don't repeat negative language from the interviewer to avoid reinforcing negative perceptions.

Interviews: Your opportunity to tell your story.

Share Your Story – Present your perspective and experiences. Communicate your message.

Create Memorable Takeaways – Focus on leaving audiences with memorable lessons.

Connect the Dots – Interviews help clarify your message, showing how different pieces fit together.

Ulfig commented that the word conservation is confusing and can be confusing for those hearing this message for the first time. He asked is there another way to phrase conservation. **Nowling** answered conservation can mean different things. There's the operational definition of what it means as opposed to the use fees. You'll have to define it for people but in this framework we're talking about habitat. **Spieles** said we want to stick with natural resource conservation. **Cooke** commented that conservation is protecting the viability of our natural resources, not necessarily protecting a life, but protecting the viability of sustainable natural communities. **Russ Mason, Nimrod** commented that Gifford Pinchot, who was the first chief of the United States Forest Service defined conservation as "the greatest good for the greatest number, for the longest period of time".

Nick Petrusha, Fusion92, shared that Bill Nowling will be actively starting to pitch our message out to media outlets in the near future and that council members should expect to be engaged as interviews begin.

Review of Protecting Michigan's Legacy Campaign Updates

Nick Petrusha, Fusion92 outlined what they will be presenting starting with the review of Q4 organic social creative for November and December, the review of the Q4 newsletter creative, MWC merchandise creative, the fishing digest print ad creative and discussion of the research plan and next steps.

Jay Fetterman, Fusion 92 presented the review of Q4 organic social creative for November and December.

November Post:

Conservation in Action: Let's Get Ready to Hibernate (Static)

Fusion92 to investigate swapping in more of a Michigan looking background behind the woodchuck.

Holiday: Michigan Operation Freedom Outdoors - Veterans day message (Static)

MWC to verify math is correct.

Community Connection and Engagement: Gun Hunting Season Starts message (Static)

Russ Mason commented that deer hunting doesn't happen in deer camps as it once did.

Frasier commented that deer camps do spark interest in hunting and have appeal.

Impact of Outdoor Recreation: Steelhead Season (Static)

Spieles commented on changing the wording because steelheads peak season is April but there is a fall steelhead season. Call it Fall Steelhead season.

Ulfig commented it'd be nice to see waterfowl in a post. Fusion92 to consider swapping this with a waterfowl.

Education and Awareness: Turkey Facts (Animation)

Fun turkey facts are given.

Funding and Policy Transparency: (static)

A resource analyst with the DNR fisheries team gave statements for this post.

December Post:

Conservation in Action: Deer Harvest Reporting (Static)
Fusion92 to swap in new deer blind image or image of archery hunter.
Fusion 92 to update super copy "Bag It, Tag It, Report It"

Impact of Outdoor Recreation: Profile – Hunters Feeding Michigan (Animated Video)

Community Connection and Engagement: MUCC On-the-Ground Partnership With DNR (Static)
Fusion 92 to swap in background image.

Education and Awareness: Snowy Owls (Static)

Funding and Policy Transparency: 2025 Budget Allocations (Animated Video)
Fusion92 Thank you slide - update copy to add "Your Investment".
NotMISpecies Webinar: Pests in Christmas Trees (Static)

Review of the Q4 Newsletter Creative
Fusion92 to swap in waterfowl story for steelhead.

MWC Merchandise Creative
Fusion92 showed t-shirt, polo and vest options with the MWC name on them. The council liked the long sleeve t-shirt option.
Fusion92 to explore vendor options and pricing, including a preferred vendor - Carhartt.

Fishing Digest Print Ad Creative
Move forward with option 1 messaging: Casting Into Conservation
Update copy to "\$30 million". **Spieles** to confirm accuracy.

Research plan
Fusion92 and Responsive Management have met over the last several weeks to determine a research plan. The recommendation is to continue working with Responsive Management because they are reputable and have an existing relationship with the council. We also believe there is value in having consistency from previous years of research.

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

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

Public Comment

No public comment.

New Business

Garvon said the council received an email that the MWC is on the stakeholder list for public notice on the opening of the state forest roads. **Spieles** said it would be an annual notification of roads, open or closed on state forest land that's DNR managed. All agreed that the council does not need to be on that list.

Garvon said Senator Cherry's office contacted him about bill 0538 asking if the MWC would write a letter support to designate the Eastern Wild Turkey as Michigan's state game bird.

Levey made a motion that the council by letter supports the designation of a state game bird. **Cooke** seconded it, and the motion was passed unanimously.

Michigan Outdoors.com domain takes you to a sight called the Dark Horse Brewery. Fusion92 is looking into whether we own both domains. **Nick Petrusha, Fusion92** is pretty sure they did secure the domain when Fusiom92 took over the account.

Ulfig commented that for the merchandise, Carhartt is a decent Michigan company and ask if they could be given strong consideration.

Next Meeting

The council discussed February 26, 2026 as the next meeting date and a location of the Lansing Customer Service Center. Fusion92 will report on the campaign analytics and survey research results. We will also discuss future 2026 meetings during that meeting.

Levey made a motion to adjourn the meeting for a tour of the Bay City Park facility. **Cooke** seconded it, and the motion was passed unanimously. The MWC meeting was adjourned at 12:54 p.m. to tour the facility.