



2023-2024  
**Legislative Priorities**  
Michigan United Conservation Clubs





# PLANT THE SEED



Give one year of **TRACKS** magazine  
to that special youth in your life!



# Since 1937

Michigan United Conservation Clubs has advocated for healthy wildlife, vibrant ecosystems and the protection of Michigan's hunting, fishing and trapping heritage.

Founded on one simple purpose: Keep politics and political whims out of Michigan's natural resources and the management of them.

Known nationally as a force in the conservation world, MUCC's fingerprints are on pieces of legacy legislation like the Michigan Bottle Bill, the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, increased poaching penalties and stiffer pollution fines.

As a nonpartisan 501c3 nonprofit, MUCC aims to help lawmakers understand the intrinsic link between conservation, hunting, angling and the shooting sports.

At the adjournment of the organization's first meeting, Ben East, famous outdoor writer, wrote the conservation pledge:

I give my pledge as an American to save and faithfully defend from waste the natural resources of my country — its air, soil and minerals, its forests, waters and wildlife.



# MUCC Advocacy Team

Sign up for our Policy Action Center!



## Amy Trotter, Executive Director



Known throughout the conservation and policy communities as an expert negotiator and policy guru, Trotter has spent more than 20 years working on natural resources policy in Lansing.

Her resume includes strengthening wetland protections, helping to secure conservation funding through Proposal 1 of 2020, the moratorium on the sterilization of deer and the continued fight for state management of wolves.

Since 2007, Amy has been the steadfast voice of MUCC members and their policy resolutions that legislators and rulemakers have come to know for more than a decade.

In her free time, she enjoys spending time with her two young daughters, instilling in them conservation ethics, and fishing and hunting with her husband, Marc.



## Justin Tomei, Policy Assistant



Justin joined MUCC in January of 2022. He lives in the Grand Rapids area with his wife and daughter. Originally from Traverse City, Justin grew up chasing turkeys, deer, squirrels and fishing for anything that would bite.

He has a B.S. in Political Science from Grand Valley State University and has spent most of his professional career running political campaigns. His goal in the conservation space is to make sure his daughter has the same hunting and angling opportunities he did.



## Bill Jackson

MUCC Lobbyist

McAlvey Merchant and Associates



Michigan United Conservation Clubs is proud to employ a Barnum Policy Fellow each spring. This position is meant to help college students gain hands-on advocacy experience.



# Commercial Guiding

## Quick Hits:

- Currently, Michigan has little regulation for inland hunting and fishing guides.
- There is nothing stopping someone from guiding who has been convicted of egregious wildlife violations .
- Data reporting from guides would be required to better manage our natural resources.

## Advocates



Commercial guiding regulation has been a priority of the conservation community for almost a decade now, and MUCC membership first saw the need for reform in the late 1990s.

Currently, Michigan's commercial guiding industry is **largely unregulated**. A regulatory framework would prevent poachers and other bad actors from posing as legitimate guides

while providing new critical tools to law enforcement and biologists alike.

During the 2021-2022 legislative session, HB 5358-5360 **received near unanimous support** from the conservation community but ultimately got no further than to the house floor with a light legislative schedule in an election year.

Data gathering should be a critical part of any legislative

package. Guides are on the water and in the field more than anyone and sometimes host hundreds of clients a year.

This package of bills **requires a minimum requirement of entry** to protect Michigan's rich outdoor heritage and the important economic contributions of Michigan's hunting and fishing guides.

## 2022 Version:

- \$150 three-year registration fee for residents; \$300 for non-residents.
- Existing charter captains operating with a US Coast Guard license are exempt from the registration fee.
- Data reporting is required, similar to what is required currently on the Great Lakes and connecting waterways.
- All commercial guides must possess: a valid base hunting (\$11) or fishing license (\$26); must be CPR and first aid certified, and have a state identification card or driver's license.
- A person must not have been convicted of any felony or certain fish and game violations in the past three years.
- Common sense exemptions respect private landowners and hunting and angling recruitment efforts.



# Commercial Fishing Modernization

## Quick Hits:

- Michigan's state-licensed commercial fishing statute hasn't been updated significantly since 1970.
- MDNR oversight and enforcement costs are not covered by licensing fees for commercial anglers — recreational angler license dollars subsidize this.
- These bills ensure walleye, perch, salmon and lake trout stay out of commercial nets.

Current statutes and administrative rules regarding the licensing and regulation of commercial fishers in Michigan are decades old and do not sufficiently protect game fish from commercial impacts. Further, MDNR conservation officers are unable to adequately protect the fisheries from exploitation and illegal activity due to the outdated statute.

A three-bill package during the

2019-2020 legislative session (HBs 4567-4569) would have updated Michigan's decades-old statute by keeping game fish out of commercial nets, establishing penalties for the illegal sale of game fish, requiring GPS net marking and reporting net locations for commercial anglers, and mandating regular harvest reporting to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. The existing statute

has not been updated since 1970. The legislation passed the House and spent eight months without a vote in the Senate Natural Resources Committee.

This bill would not allow game fish to be retained as bycatch, although other species may be considered allowable bycatch. Increased monitoring of nets and enforcement tools will help protect Michigan's sportfishing heritage.

## Advocates



**MSSFA**

## 2019-20 Version:

- Creates a list of all species available for commercial harvest, in turn protecting game species.
- Requires commercial fishers to check their nets regularly and regulate the allowable gear in relation to the time of year and location of nets.
- Establishes penalties for the taking, possessing, or selling of specific species. Game fish unlawfully taken will incur a higher fine.
- Exceeding bycatch allowances results in fines, and the MDNR shall conduct a study at least every three years to determine the allowable bycatch and adjust quotas accordingly.
- Creates penalties for a person intentionally obstructing the legal taking of fish.
- Requires commercial fishers to report the GPS coordinates of their nets to the MDNR.



# Restoring the Intent of Proposal G

## Quick Hits:

- In 2022, DNR Executive Staff provided to the Natural Resources Commission a document outlining what it believed to be the commission's authorities.
- Citing 324.40107, the DNR has indicated there may be some split over authorities in regulations like quotas, geographic boundaries and season dates — all of which were intended to be commission authority through Proposal G.



**MUCC was founded on the belief that natural resources decision-making should be as insulated from political pressures as possible.** As a result, MUCC believes that the place for these decisions is at the NRC, as Proposal G of 1996 and the 2014 Scientific Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act intended. Going through the legislative process for many of our issues makes them susceptible to citizen referendums and ballot-box biology funded by the anti-conservationist movement.

## Fix MCL 324.40107

MUCC desires to fix this old statute **in partnership with the DNR and NRC**, which was overlooked when Proposal G was written and passed in 1996. A fix would provide the NRC with the authority it needs to insulate Natural Resources decisions from political pressures, while also providing the DNR the legal protection and ability to appeal decisions it views as contrary to the best available science.

## Natural Resources Commission Commissioners

**Mark "David" Anthony (D)**  
Bark River, MI 49855  
anthonydave473@gmail.com  
Appointed: 1/7/22  
Term Expires: 12/31/25

**Tom Baird, Chair (D)**  
Elk Rapids, MI 49629  
517-290-6647  
Appointed: 3/25/21  
Term Expires: 12/31/24

**David Cozad (D)**  
Bay City, MI 48706  
989-529-1659  
Appointed: 3/25/21  
Term Expires: 12/31/24

**John Walters (R)**  
Gaylord, MI 49734  
john.walters.8ft4wt@gmail.com  
Appointed: 2/2/23  
Term Expires: 12/31/26

**Leslie Love (D)**  
Oak Park, MI 48237  
313-549-7469  
Appointed: 1/7/22  
Term Expires: 12/31/23

**David Nyberg (I)**  
Marquette, MI 49855  
906-250-6339  
Appointed: 2/2/23  
Term Expires: 12/31/26

**Carol Rose (I)**  
18555 Glacier Tr.  
Hillman, MI 49746  
989-657-4228  
Appointed: 6/23/20  
Term Expires: 12/31/23





# 2023-2024 Legislative

## Secure funding for important conservation priorities:

- **\$30 million (GF/GP) for wetland restoration projects** in the Lake Erie and Saginaw Bay regions in an effort to mitigate toxic algae bloom in these watersheds.
- **Cormorant Program:** The program needs at least \$250,000 in annual funding (GF/GP) to be effective, which includes at least \$150,000 for cormorant management and \$100,000 for harassment, and required monitoring and reporting.
- Use general funds to reimburse the game and fish fund the lost revenue from legislatively discounted Senior and Active Military/Veterans Hunting and Fishing licenses.
- **\$500,000 for Chronic Wasting Disease testing.**
- **Filling the State Park Endowment Fund to its constitutional cap.**
- Approve the recommendations of the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board in an expedient manner for projects and acquisitions that expand access and recreational opportunities for Michigan residents.
- **Michigan Pheasant Release program:** ensure the program is funded in a timely manner and in alignment with the fund account to ensure the program remains as robust as possible.
- **Long-Term Conservation Funding:** It is no secret that the number of hunters is declining. MUCC remains dedicated to ensuring restricted license dollars are allocated for their intended purposes, AND looking for creative and effective solutions to fund conservation long term.



## General Fund Reimbursement for Senior & Active Military/Veterans Licenses



At the creation of the Senior and Active Military/Veterans Discounted hunting license, the legislature agreed to reimburse the DNR the difference in the discount to the department's restricted license sales fund. **The legislature has not fulfilled this statutory responsibility** by adding general funds to the DNR budget. MUCC would like to see this funding reimbursed as it **results in a loss of several million in lost license revenue** to the department on an annual basis, and an estimated \$26 million has been lost in total, according to the department.





# Priorities

## Aquatic Habitat

Lake associations have less regulatory oversight than ever before and are directly affecting them, ecology of lakes, rivers, streams, and other water bodies negatively.

Waterfront property owners, by aggressively addressing aquatic invasives, may cause unintended negative consequences for native vegetation. These native species are essential to proper fish habitat, shoreline structure and overall lake ecology.

## Hunter Harassment

MUCC policy supports increased hunter harassment penalties. Penalize cyber hunter harassment, including bolstered penalties if the hunter is a minor. Support a ban on the use of drones and video as a hunter harassment tool.

## Artificial Lights

It is illegal for a hunter to walk in or out of their hunting locations, outside of 1 hour before shooting light and one hour after shooting light, with artificial light and unloaded weapons. MUCC seeks to remove this unnecessary and unenforced law and allow hunters to access their hunting location with an unloaded weapon at-least two hours before and after the legal shooting light.

**Managed Land Strategy:** Approve the managed land strategy and remove the cap on state public land ownership.

## Decriminalization of Failure to Report Deer Harvest

Under MCL 324.40118, a violation of a Natural Resources Commission order is a misdemeanor punishable by up to a \$500 fine and 90 days in jail. MUCC wishes to see a form of decriminalization pass related to harvest reporting.

## Charitable Gaming

During the 2021/2022 Legislative Session, HB 5393 was passed by the House but stalled in the Senate. This legislation would have amended the state's gaming laws to allow certain non-profit organizations to conduct online raffles. This modernization of raffle laws would allow non-profits new ways to fundraise.

## Improving Sport Shooting Ranges Protection Act

Currently, existing shooting ranges are protected from frivolous nuisance complaints by the Sport Shooting Ranges Protection Act if they are following generally accepted operating procedures. However, if a facility chooses to upgrade its range, including modifications to improve safety and environmental protections, the facility may lose its status under the act and becomes subject to nuisance complaints.



# Federal Priorities



## Recovering America's Wildlife Act

Last year RAWA nearly crossed the finish line in Congress. MUCC and its national partners will be pursuing a reintroduction of RAWA with the same name, purpose, and structure. This vital conservation legislation has the potential to be **a generational accomplishment in conservation funding** and the goal is passage in both houses by the fall of 2023.



## Full Funding for Brandon Road Lock and Dam

The Brandon Road Lock and Dam Project is an important conservation infrastructure project necessary to prevent invasive carp from accessing the Great Lakes. This project is currently funded at an 90% federal 10% non-federal level after an increase from 80%/20% last year. However, the burden is still too great for the Great Lake's states to bear. **100% funding is needed.**



## Modernize the Endangered Species Act

The ESA has accounted for some great recovery successes since its inception in 1973. However, once a species is listed it is incredibly difficult to delist. **The ESA continues to be weaponized against its own victories.** Perpetual litigation, always on bureaucratic technicalities and never biology, has resulted in a merry-go-round of delisting and re-listing.



# Michigan Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus Advisory Council



Formed in 2015, the Michigan Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus Advisory Council was established **to advance Michigan's outdoor heritage through science-based wildlife and fisheries management** and the wise use of our state's natural resources, and to protect and advance the rights and traditions of Michigan citizens to hunt, fish, recreationally shoot and trap by engaging in an open dialogue with the Michigan Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus.

In this role, the Advisory Council interacts with the Caucus by:

- Assisting in the facilitation of meetings and events between the sportsmen's community and the Caucus, including fundraising to cover event costs and administrative needs of the Council;
- Assisting Caucus leadership in the development of Caucus priority policy issues as well as providing briefing materials on pertinent legislation;
- Assisting Caucus leadership in the development of legislative strategy, including rallying grassroots support, and;
- Serving as the informational link to the hunting, angling, recreational shooting and trapping community on the activities of the Caucus.

## 2023-24 Michigan Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus Advisory Council Officers and Members:

Chair - Amy Trotter, Michigan United Conservation Clubs

Vice Chair - Kyle Rorah, Ducks Unlimited

Treasurer - Justin Tomei, Michigan United Conservation Clubs

Secretary - Nick Buggia, Ruffed Grouse Society

### Members:

- Michigan United Conservation Clubs
- Michigan Bear Hunters Association
- Michigan Hunting Dog Federation
- Michigan Trappers and Predator Callers Association
- National Wild Turkey Federation
- Ruffed Grouse Society
- Pheasants Forever
- Safari Club International
- National Rifle Association
- National Deer Association

- Upper Peninsula Bear Houndsmen Association
- Upper Peninsula Sportsmen's Alliance
- Michigan Steelhead & Salmon Fishermen's Association
- Trout Unlimited

### Ex-Officio Member Organizations:

- Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
- Hal and Jean Glassen Memorial Foundation





MICHIGAN UNITED CONSERVATION CLUBS



Join the  
**LARGEST STATEWIDE**  
**CONSERVATION ORGANIZATION**  
in the nation

ADVOCATED ON

**100+**

BILLS LAST LEGISLATIVE SESSION

IMPROVED

**6,000+**

ACRES OF PUBLIC LAND & WATERWAYS

LEVERAGED

**15,000+**

VOLUNTEER HOURS

GUIDED

**58,000+**

YOUTH INTO THE CONSERVATION SPACE



LEARN MORE