

June 22, 2022

RE: Public Comment on Proposed Camp Grayling Lease Expansion

Hello,

My name is Abraham Downer, and as a member of the Ruffed Grouse Society, American Woodcock Society, Trout Unlimited, and Ducks Unlimited, I have a direct interest in how this area will be affected by the US National Guard's proposal to expand the area of state lands in which military training may be conducted at Camp Grayling.

I am also a member of Michigan United Conservation Clubs, the Conservation Policy Board and a voting delegate for region 3. MUCC adopted a resolution in 1989 that opposes expansion of the Camp Grayling training facility except in the state of a National Emergency. I also personally oppose any proposal that seeks to expand the Camp Grayling training area. Limiting the public's access, due to military training, is an intrusion on our public lands.

This area is located directly in the heart of one of the largest expanses of state land in Michigan's lower peninsula. I spend much of the fall hunting, camping, and spending money in the local economies that surround Camp Grayling. According to the 2017 MUCC Economic Impact Study, the State of Michigan relies on an 8.9 billion dollar hunting industry. Much of the tourism that flows through the towns and villages in the nearby areas can be directly attributed to hunters and anglers. Limiting public land access to this demographic, will in turn hurt the communities that cater to them.

With increased urbanization and expansion into rural communities, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find large, contiguous areas of suitable habitat to hunt and recreate on. Many hunters and anglers agree that public lands are becoming more overcrowded and access to these lands is something we need to fight for rather than expect as a part of our land trust with the State of Michigan. Furthermore, habitat for game species is becoming less suitable, further fragmented, and poorly managed. As a result, many game species are in decline. The only way to maintain a diverse, suitable ecosystem for the benefit of these species is to manage it for them, not for the benefit of the US Military.

In the FAQ document provided by Camp Grayling officials, under the question "How will this affect recreational land use, ecosystems, and award-winning rivers?" officials make a sad attempt to pander to one facet of the hunting community by saying they will not conduct any military training from November 15th – November 30th, while conveniently side-stepping the rest of the question.

This speaks to how out of touch the proposal is with the residents, and non-residents, that choose this hunt and recreate in this area. Hunting in Michigan is not a monolith that can only be allocated to rifle arm deer season. Our community is diverse, and our hunting seasons reflect that. Small game season is open from September 15th-March 31st, with many other hunting

seasons occupying this same period. Turkey season also occupies about 6 weeks in the months of April and May.

I ask the State of Michigan Department of Natural Resources, on behalf of its residents, to which it is beholden, that they immediately deny this proposal for expanding the lands in which Camp Grayling may conduct training exercises.