

**YANKEE SPRINGS TOWNSHIP  
 PLANNING COMMISSION**  
**Special Joint Meeting of Planning Commission, Board of Trustees  
 and Zoning Board of Appeals**  
**7:00 p.m.**  
**February 20, 2025**  
**Yankee Springs Township Hall**  
**284 North Briggs Road, Middleville, Michigan 49333**  
**MINUTES**

**MINUTES**  
**Page 1 of 6 PC**  
**APPROVED: \_\_**  
**Special PC Mtg.**  
**February 20, 2025**

Meeting called to order at 7:00 PM by Planning Commission Chair, Shana Bush.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**Roll Call:** Present: Kooistra, Knowles, Frigmanski, Fiala, Craven, Bush, Beukema. ALL PRESENT

**Absent with Notice:** 0

**Staff Present:** Dennis Buist-Constable, Deb Mousseau, Joe Shea, Rob Heethuis, Tom Mawson

**Visitors:** 6 (not including staff present)

**Guests:** Barry State Game Area DNR - Randal Heinze, Joe Drexler  
 Yankee Springs DNR - Joseph Jandernoa, Lucas Galaviz

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

**Adds/Changes:**

- none

*Motion by Fiala with support from Frigmanski to approve tonight's agenda. All AYES.*

**MOTION CARRIED.**

**NEW BUSINESS:**

DNR presentations on long-term plans for Yankee Springs Township properties.

MDNR - Wildlife Division, Barry State Game Area

Staff: Randy Heinze - Wildlife Biologist

Joe Drexler - Wildlife Technician

Mike Gilkes - Wildlife Assistant (not present)

Presentation by Randy Henize

Information was shared about the work of the Wildlife Division of the DNR in Barry County. A powerpoint presentation highlighting maps and their responsibilities in the region was given. Highlights from the presentation:

Our Purpose: The Southwest region is dedicated to help make wildlife available for people who desire to have a quality experience with Michigan's wild animals in wild places. We believe that wildlife resources are held in trust for the people of

**CALL TO ORDER**

**PLEDGE**

**ROLL CALL**

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**NEW BUSINESS**

**REPORT by  
 DNR-Wildlife  
 Division**

Michigan and it is our privilege and responsibility to sustainably manage those resources in southwest Michigan. Since natural communities are ever changing we take innovative and adaptive approaches to fulfill our obligations for resource protection. Finally, we take pride in our work and perform our duties with excellence as we strive to serve Michigan's citizens.

**Focal Areas** (listed in priority order):

- Wildlife Habitat Management
- State Game Area (SGA) Maintenance
- Wildlife Population Management
- Wildlife Recreation
- Wildlife Division Land Administration
- Working with Partners

**State Game Area Master Plan**

**10-year plans** that set overarching goals for game area habitat management.

- Species objectives
- Forest management
- Grass and croplands
- Wetlands

The 10 Year Master Plan for the Barry State Game Area is on the DNR website ([https://www.michigan.gov/dnr/-/media/Project/Websites/dnr/Documents/WLD/SGA/barry\\_sga\\_mp.pdf?rev=c0941decca8d4231bf3d29c49d533e7d&hash=FB61B0B9EE3AFF13F397A79113A0E2EA](https://www.michigan.gov/dnr/-/media/Project/Websites/dnr/Documents/WLD/SGA/barry_sga_mp.pdf?rev=c0941decca8d4231bf3d29c49d533e7d&hash=FB61B0B9EE3AFF13F397A79113A0E2EA))

The current 10 Year Master Plan is for 2015 - 2025.

**Yearly Operational Plan** - set goals and solicit funding

- Repairs to infrastructure
- habitat projects
- other special projects

**Questions from PC:**

Q: What about coyotes?

A: Their numbers seem to be fairly steady, people hunt them on a steady basis. They are very elusive. There are a lot of coyotes, but they don't seem to be massively increasing.

Q: Chronic waste and Bird flu?

A: Bird flu seems to be on an uptick nationwide. It's extremely contagious. I'm not sure where we're headed with it, we are even seeing impacts in the winter. It is possible that geese will die off as well.

With EHD (deer disease) - some areas had it, but others did not.

Chronic waste disease doesn't move quickly but it doesn't go away. With the high deer population, I suspect that the disease will continue to spread.

Q: Is the 10 Year Master Plan available in print?

A: Available online in pdf. Can be printed off - they will send the PC a copy.

Q: Hall Lake - what is happening there?

A: There is a public information meeting on March 12th, 4:30 - 6:30 PM at the Hastings City Library to get information on the plan for Hall Lake. Representatives will be available for questions.

Q: Dead deer pick up alongside the road - costly to remove them. Any comments on this?

**MINUTES**

**Page 2 of 6 PC**

**APPROVED: \_\_**

Special PC Mtg.

A: No comment about this at this time.

Q: Does the DNR sell lands?

A: We do sell lands, but not inside the acquisition boundary. Funds are re-used for purchasing land in existing game areas.

### **Yankee Springs Recreation Area**

Joseph Jandernoa - Manager

Lucas Galaviz - Park Supervisor

Presentation by Joseph Jandernoa

The Yankee Springs General Management Plan can be found on the DNR website here:  
[https://www.michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/dnr/Documents/PRD/MgtPlans/Yankee\\_Springs\\_GMP.pdf?rev=82edab95fab3411f867194ad292a5eee](https://www.michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/dnr/Documents/PRD/MgtPlans/Yankee_Springs_GMP.pdf?rev=82edab95fab3411f867194ad292a5eee)

Information was shared regarding their work in the Yankee Springs Recreation Area.

- Of special note, the Yankee Springs facilities were closed last year for major renovation. The campground will open April 1st. The buildings are in the final stage of completion. Reservations are open.
- The 10 year Management Plan for Yankee Springs was approved in 2016. A new 10 year update will be done in 2026.
- A public interest survey was done in 2015 to give input to the Management Plan. The top five activities undertaken in the survey were: mountain biking, camping, hiking, boating/canoeing/kayaking, fishing/ice fishing.
- The amount of hikers all year round has increased dramatically.

Natural Resource Focus Goals:

- Invasive Species Control
- Follow requirements of CCAA (protected Eastern Massasauga snake)
- Stewardship plan/conservations targets and natural resource management strategies
- Maintain and restore exemplary natural communities
- Restore fen habitat to support Michel Satyr habitat (Deep Lake Fen), explore reintroduction (this is a butterfly)
- Restore Hall Lake Fen
- Explore restoring hydrology affected by Hall Lake and Gun Lake Water Control structures.

Historical/Cultural Resources Goals:

Partner with Native American Tribes to establish the rice beds at Long Lake and to provide cultural and historical awareness through interpretation and programming.

Also reported on:

Recreation Opportunities Goals ([www.michigan.gov/dnr](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr))

- New Equestrian staging area
- Maintaining of trails
- Hall Lake -evaluation of making a better access site area/trail head area for Hall Lake Trail.

Education/Interpretation Goals

**MINUTES**

**Page 3 of 6 PC**

**APPROVED: \_\_\_**  
Special PC Mtg.

**PRESENTATION  
by DNR-Yankee  
Springs  
Recreation Dept.**

- ongoing expansion of educational programs for kids

Marketing and Outreach Division

- In the design process: An Archery/Pellet Gun Range at the Long Lake Outdoor Center Facility for Youth-based education and engagement. Will be good for kids.

Management Focus Goals

- Meet annually with local fire dept re wildlife and structure fire prevention, reaching people on trails, accessibility, etc.
- Trespassing issues - an ongoing issue.
- Ensure the protection of the North Country National Scenic Trail.

Development Goals

All previous goals will be accomplished going into this season. In 2026 there will be a 10 Year Management Plan Update. The Update will include stakeholder and public input to develop new 10-year action goals.

Questions:

Q: Where is the Yankee Springs Park ranked in usage in the state?

A: Always in the top 10.

Q: Do you have anything to do with the North Country Trail?

A: Yes. The North Country Trail runs through the park. It joins with Hall Lake Trail, breaks off, and goes through 3 game areas. The North Country Trail Association Chief Noontday Chapter is very active in the recreation area and does amazing work.

Q: Can they regulate the number of boats on Gun Lake? Mr. Knowles notes that the lake is often overcrowded.

A: There are logistical issues. There are many concerns to look at. If it is an ongoing concern, Joe Jandernoa can bring it forward. A suggestion is made to have a sit down conversation with township leaders and Yankee Springs leaders (involve the PRD) to discuss this issue.

Q: The township puts out the buoys (warning of hazards) on Gun Lake and pays for that. Wondering if we can get financial help with putting the buoys out.

A: They do not have any authority on the water. Joe Jandernoa will check into it.

Q: The Long Lake Center - do you lease that out?

A: It is still leased out. That lease is ending and we're hoping to be finalizing a new lease with a new lessee there for multiple years. They will be leasing both facilities now - Chief Noontday and Long Lake.

Q: Has our Fire Station been in contact with you?

A: Yes. They are in communication regarding emergency response in the area.

Q: Can we (the Planning Commission) get a map of the Game Area and the Recreation Area separately so that we can put it accurately on our map?

A: Joe will send a pdf of the presentation and the maps to Frank Fiala.

Mr. Fiala: We are blessed to have the facilities and services in this area and thank you for what you do.

Mr. Jandernoa expressed thanks for the support from the community to keep this area clean and maintained.

Shana Bush thanks the DNR presenters for sharing with us tonight.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** *(Limit to 3 minutes per person)*

**Maxine Beukema** (YS Township Resident): Thank you guys for what you do. Question about trails. How do I know I'm on a trail and not on somebody's property?

Answer: All the trails in the recreation area are color coded. Follow the trail symbol and color. If you're not on a colored trail, you're probably on an old trail (spur trail) that is not officially designated. They are re-marking the trails to make them more clear.

**Robin Laansma** (YS Township Resident, Payne Lake Road): Question about the bird flu. Do you confirm that those birds all died of bird flu?

Answer: We have confirmation that many birds died in Allegan County from bird flu. Not sure they have positive specimens in Barry County. It is very contagious between birds. The particular strain going around now is more deadly and more contagious.

Q: Have you had more deaths this year than previous years?

A: Yes. It seems to be ramping up quicker and faster than in the past. Also note: There will be no relocation of geese this year.

Thank you.

**Dave Laansma** (YS Springs Township Resident, Payne Lake Road): Thank you for coming. We appreciate all the input and information. I have a follow up on the bird flu.

Q: Does this strain show indication that it will run its course and die out?

A: It's difficult to tell, resistance comes in exposure without fatalities. As this progresses and there is a large population that contacts the virus and survives, it will kill the virus and it will run its course. Theoretically the answer is yes. But we will go through more mortality before we get there.

Q: The Horseman Camp Trail - does that go onto the state game area?

A: Some of it goes onto the state game area and is closed during the hunting season. There are 3 horse trails.

Q: How does it rank among the state?

A: From my assessment, it's number 1. Yankee Springs Trail Riders Association is a top notch organization to work with.

**Catherine Getty** (YS Township resident, County Commissioner): I'm proud to be a Yankee Springs resident. These are questions that I hear from constituents.

Q: When is the shooting range going to be open and will it be staffed?

A: The Marketing and Outreach Division of the Parks Dept. will handle the shooting range. These are brand new departments. This program is being built from the ground up. They built the ranges and then tried to get people to manage them. The intention is to have a full time staff member at the YS shooting range. It is not known if it will be a year round shooting range.

Q: Mute Swan management - The Mute Swan seems to be making a comeback on our inland lakes. Several years ago there was active Mute Swan management. What is the status of this now?

**MINUTES**  
**Page 5 of 6 PC**  
**APPROVED: \_\_\_**  
Special PC Mtg.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

A: The Mute Swan management program is not urgent or mandatory, so doing these types of outreach programs when we are short staffed is the first to go. We are still doing management on lakes where we have contracts. There are some areas that we will probably not be able to do eradication programs - we may be able to do some other kind of control like egg oiling. It generates a lot of backlash. Contact the DNR office if you have a problem you want addressed or if you want a permit.

Q: Regarding fully accessible trails, there is excitement about the state parks but I am wondering about those who are less able bodied.

A: All of our new facilities in Yankee Springs are ADA accessible. There will be an ADA accessible trail attached to the fishing pier, which will also be ADA accessible.

Question from Mr. Fiala: You are aware of the beavers frequently coming into and out of Payne Lake. Any comments you can make?

A: This will be a constant battle. Low fur prices contribute to trappers not participating in removing beavers. The population is growing and is reaching a saturation level. You can essentially remove them at any time on private property following hunting and trapping regulations. On state land, they have trappers that will help out. If you have a complaint, let the DNR know.

**MINUTES**  
**Page 6 of 6 PC**  
**APPROVED:\_\_\_**  
Special PC Mtg.  
February 20, 2025

**ADJOURNMENT:**

*Motion by Fiala with support from Beukema to adjourn meeting at 8:28 pm. All AYES.*  
**MOTION CARRIED.**

Approved by: Frank Fiala 3/20/25  
Frank Fiala, Planning Commission Secretary Date

Respectfully submitted by  
Diane Dykgraaf, Recording Secretary

**ADJOURNMENT**