

**Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR)  
Natural Heritage Advisory Committee (NHAC)**

**Committee Charter**

Approved November 2, 2021

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<b>Purpose and Scope</b>	<p>To advise and be advocates for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' (DNR's) efforts to sustain the state's natural heritage and biological diversity. The Committee is intended to be a voice for protection of high-quality natural resources and an advisor leading to more integrated and effective work towards that end.</p> <p>Scope: Specifically, the Committee advises the DNR and its Division of Ecological and Water Resources (EWR) on topics/issues related to the following EWR units/programs: Scientific and Natural Areas (SNAs), prairie stewardship, Nongame Wildlife, Minnesota Biological Survey, rare species protection, terrestrial invasive species, forest and wetland monitoring, and State Wildlife Action Plan. For purposes of this Committee and charter, these programs (above) are collectively referred to as EWR's natural heritage-related programs and determine the scope of the committee. These programs are administered by different organizational parts of EWR and are only a portion of the EWR's scope and mission, which emphasize healthy watersheds.</p> <p>Desired outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Insightful conversations and meaningful engagement between program subject matter experts and Committee members.</li><li>• Well-informed recommendations for sustaining the state's natural heritage and biological diversity, including targeted review and constructive critique of programs, policies, activities, operations, outreach, marketing, funding, administrative rule-making, and related legislation;</li><li>• Advocacy for programs and actions that aim to sustain the state's natural heritage and biological diversity, and assistance in promoting these efforts;</li><li>• Identification and pursuit of opportunities through partnerships to increase the protection of high-quality natural resources; and</li><li>• Shared understanding among Committee members of issues related to the state's natural heritage and biological diversity, as well as the impacts of invasive species upon them.</li></ul> <p>Resulting from :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Trust among participants in the Committee process</li><li>• Collaborative relationship between the Committee and the DNR</li><li>• Effective exploration of targeted natural heritage-related issues</li><li>• Effective administration and management of the Committee</li></ul>
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<p><b>Audience and Affected Staff</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DNR commissioners and senior managers (particularly the EWR Division Director), through substantive conversations, position statements, letters, and reports via EWR staff to senior management;</li> <li>• All DNR employees who participate in the natural heritage-related work, their supervisors, and the management chain of responsibility above them, through the program supervisors and coordinators who participate in the Committee;</li> <li>• The Minnesota Legislature and Governor, through recommendations by the Committee to the Commissioner; and</li> <li>• Organizations and individuals whose actions influence the state’s natural heritage and biological diversity.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Authorization</b></p>	<p>This Committee was initiated in 1966 to advise on establishment of the SNA Program. Its scope gradually expanded over the years with a formalization of its expanded scope in 2014. The Committee is authorized by the DNR Commissioner and the Ecological and Water Resources Director. The Committee is ongoing.</p>
<p><b>Membership</b></p>	<p>The Committee comprises 13-17 members selected from a pool of applicants by the DNR Commissioner in consideration of recommendations by DNR Ecological and Water Resources staff. The Committee informs the appointment process by suggesting desired characteristics of new members and by reaching out to potential applicants. Members must be residents of Minnesota and may not be current employees of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. Current non-DNR employees of the State of Minnesota are eligible to be members as long as their position in state employment does not present an inherent conflict with the committee’s roles and responsibilities.</p> <p>Members are preferred who have knowledge of, demonstrated dedication to and/or experience related to natural area systems, conservation biology, ecology, environmental education, natural resource management, or protection of Minnesota’s rare species, natural communities, geology, and other components of natural diversity. People from conservation organizations, government agencies, local elected officials, research institutions, tribes, and businesses are encouraged to apply for appointment.</p> <p>In addition, non-voting EWR staff from affected programs provide information to the Committee and participate in its meetings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The DNR will publicly solicit applications for open seats in the fall, with new members’ terms starting in January of the following year; appointments may start sooner to fill expired vacancies. Members are eligible to serve up to two, three-year terms. Current Committee members nearing the end of their first term and interested in serving a second term must apply for that appointment. Current members are not guaranteed appointment to a second term. When a member resigns prior to the end of their term, the remainder of that vacant term may be filled, usually during the next open appointment process. Member appointment letters will specify the beginning and end dates of the term; DNR will keep track of member appointment terms. A member may voluntarily withdraw from their term of appointment by notifying the Committee Chair and DNR manager liaison or the DNR commissioner by email or letter. The commissioner may terminate an appointment if the member does not meet the expectations for a member in good standing, and will communicate a termination of appointment to the member by email or letter.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Meeting Schedule</b></p>	<p>The Committee will typically conduct six regular Committee meetings per year; meeting on the first Wednesday of every other month (February, April, June, August, October, December). The Committee may hold additional meetings, including call-in meetings, at the discretion of the chair or by majority vote of the Committee. The Committee may also conduct field trips in lieu of or in addition to regular meetings. Meetings will typically be four hours and may possibly be six hours in length; field trips may be longer.</p> <p>Generally, DNR hosts in-person committee meetings in St. Paul at the DNR Central Office (500 Lafayette Road, St. Paul), with an option for members to participate virtually. Meetings may also be held with all participants joining virtually. Meetings may be held in other locations or other parts of the state and may be combined with a field trip.</p> <p>The DNR will establish Committee meeting agendas in consultation with the Chair. Agendas for regular meetings will typically include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Introductions of those in attendance,</li> <li>2) Approval of past meeting notes,</li> <li>3) Approval of the agenda, with amendments</li> <li>4) EWR program updates,</li> <li>5) Committee business,</li> <li>6) A focus topic typically addressed through a briefing on background information (which may be also sent to the Committee prior to the meeting) and an opportunity for questions and answers followed by Committee discussion and recommendations, and</li> <li>7) Identification of agenda items for inclusion at subsequent meetings.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Major Milestones</b></p>	<p><u>The Committee will work to accomplish the following outcomes each year:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ The Committee will review and make recommendations on selected key initiatives, plans, policies, and actions of EWR’s natural heritage-related programs.</li> <li>★ The Committee will recommend, review, and, where appropriate, advocate for natural heritage-related legislation that is pending and key budget proposals for EWR’s natural heritage-related programs; and</li> <li>★ The Committee will advise on marketing efforts and assist in communicating and promoting EWR natural heritage-related programs to the Commissioner’s Office and outside audiences.</li> </ul>

<b>Roles and Responsibilities</b>	<p><b>Committee members will</b> discuss and develop recommendations on topics related to the scope of the Committee. Members are expected to attend regular meetings, or to advise of their absence. If a member is unable to regularly attend meetings (either in-person or remotely) in a given calendar year, the member may be asked to relinquish their seat.</p> <p>The Committee, under the direction of the Chair, will apply Robert’s Rules of Order in developing recommendations (i.e., an orderly process developing, discussing and voting on recommendations), with a simple majority necessary to approve a motion for committee action. The default process for committee exploration of non-voting issues is standard chair-directed discussion, supplemented with EWR staff facilitation, in support of good discourse. At the discretion of the Chair and with approval of the majority of current members, votes may be taken at a meeting or electronically.</p> <p>Members may only make statements on behalf of the Committee when so authorized by Committee action or at the direction of the Committee Chair. Individual members reserve the right, when not identifying themselves as speaking for the Committee, to communicate to anyone on topics addressed in the Committee.</p>
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**Roles and Responsibilities**  
(continued)

**Committee officers will** consist of a Chair and Vice Chair/Chair-elect. Each office is held for a one-year term, and, because the Vice Chair is also the Chair-elect, the total commitment to leadership positions is for two years. Nominations for the Vice Chair will be made at the December Committee meeting and election will be held at the February meeting. A Nominating Subcommittee (consisting of the current Chair, Vice Chair, and the DNR staff lead for the Committee), with input from other Committee members, may bring forth names of candidates for the Vice Chair/Chair-elect at the December meeting.

**Duties of the Committee Chair**

- 1) Conduct the meetings of the Committee
- 2) Consult with DNR staff who are responsible for drafting meeting agendas
- 3) Along with the Vice Chair, consult with EWR staff on issues where Committee input or action is needed between meetings
- 4) Represent the Committee in interactions with DNR leadership
- 5) Author and sign official communications from the Committee
- 6) Request that DNR call special meetings or conference calls as needed between regular meetings
- 7) Request that DNR cancel meetings, if needed
- 8) Oversee Committee communications, including delegation when useful
- 9) Serve on the Nominating Subcommittee
- 10) Represent the Committee to outside entities (including the Legislature) as needed, or designate a representative to do so

**Duties of the Committee Vice Chair**

- 1) Perform the duties of the Chair in the absence of the Chair
- 2) Serve as Chair-elect to learn the duties of the Chair
- 3) Chair the Nominating Subcommittee

**DNR will** provide support and facilitation, including assignment of an EWR staff lead and a note-taker for regular Committee meetings. The DNR staff lead will serve a minimum of a one-year assignment.

The DNR Commissioner's Office, EWR managers, program supervisors and coordinators or their designees will participate in the Committee as needed to update the Committee and to provide perspective and expertise to enhance Committee discussions and recommendations. They will not be voting members when the committee develops its recommendations.

Meeting scheduling, distribution of meeting materials and facilitation are the responsibility of assigned EWR staff. Meeting notes will be taken, written and promptly distributed by EWR staff, and will be considered for approval by the Committee at the next regular meeting.

Actions taken by the Committee will be recorded in the meeting notes. Meeting notes may include individual ideas and perspectives shared at the meeting in discussion, but their inclusion is not an endorsement of those ideas and perspectives. Meeting materials and supporting documents will be e-mailed to Committee members.

<b>Ground Rules</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Meetings will start and end on time.</li> <li>2) While not subject to the open meeting law, the Committee meetings will be open to observers; the Chair may invite observers to participate in discussion.</li> <li>3) The Committee will comply with any DNR policies on advisory committees.</li> <li>4) If the Committee does not have a unanimous recommendation on an issue, the perspectives of all members will be forwarded to the EWR division director or the assistant commissioner overseeing the division.</li> <li>5) Members are appointees of the Commissioner and are not authorized to send substitutes to meetings.</li> <li>6) Members will not revisit recommendations made in their absence except by approved motion.</li> <li>7) The Chair will be clear about what recommendations are needed.</li> <li>8) Committee recommendations will be clearly articulated in meeting documentation.</li> <li>9) Members will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be courteous and respectful;</li> <li>• Understand role and purpose of the Committee;</li> <li>• Understand DNR's authority and responsibilities; and</li> <li>• Participate effectively in discussions.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
<b>Communication</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Show up and be present; seek to understand all opinions and experience.</li> <li>2) Listen for understanding; focus on problem solving.</li> <li>3) One conversation at a time; stay engaged; avoid sidebar conversations.</li> <li>4) Balance participation; try not to speak a second time until others have been heard.</li> <li>5) Challenge assumptions - your own and those of others.</li> <li>6) Use questions that focus on clarifying and exploring.</li> <li>7) Expect to learn from differences and conflict; seek creative solutions.</li> <li>8) Keep it positive: be constructive, affirm others, and keep an open mind.</li> <li>9) Disagree respectfully; provide alternatives.</li> <li>10) Minimize disputes and misunderstandings that can happen with over-reliance on e-mail messaging; switch to the phone or a personal visit when communications get stuck.</li> </ol>
<b>Resources</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Lunch will be provided during meetings straddling the noon hour for members and other approved participants.</li> <li>2) Mileage will be reimbursed for members.</li> <li>3) Additional reimbursements, such as for lodging or other special expenses, must be agreed upon in advance and apply equally to all Committee members.</li> </ol>
<b>Committee Approval</b>	Committee approval via voice vote October 2, 2019. Subsequently approved at December 4, 2019 CAC meeting via committee vote that considered edits.
<b>Revisions</b>	This charter sunsets five years from signature date and may be revised or renewed through a review and approval process.

This Charter takes effect upon signature.



Sarah Strommen, DNR Commissioner

Date: November 2, 2021