

MEMORANDUM

Date: January 8, 2026

To: Mike Mitchell, Rob Miller, Steve Dey and Todd Johnson, MUCC

From: Bill Jackson, Partner McAlvey Merchant and Associates

RE: Review of 2026 Convention Resolutions

Neutral Analysis of Proposed 2026 MUCC Policy Resolutions

Introduction:

The following document sets out to present a neutral, objective analysis of the seven policy resolutions proposed for the 2026 Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC) Convention. This review evaluates each proposal against three primary benchmarks:

1. **Proposal G Compliance:** Assessment of whether the resolution aligns with the 1996 voter-mandated "sound scientific management" of wildlife, which grants the Natural Resources Commission (NRC) exclusive authority to regulate game based on biology rather than emotion.
2. **Historical Policy Consistency:** Comparison against MUCC's extensive record of resolutions from 1965 to 2025 to identify precedents or departures from long-standing positions.
3. **Current Michigan Law and Regulatory Authority:** Clarification of whether the proposed action requires a statutory change by the Michigan Legislature or can be addressed through the regulatory authority of the NRC under the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act.

Analysis of 2025 Proposed Resolutions:

1. Request DNR to Form Panfish Committee and/or Specific Management Plan

- **Summary:** This resolution requests that the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) create a dedicated citizen advisory committee and a strategic management plan specifically for panfish and crappie. It highlights that panfish are vital for introducing new participants to angling, yet they lack the focused framework provided for other species like Walleye or Salmon.
- **Action Required:** MUCC would petition the DNR to establish a strategic management plan and a dedicated citizen advisory committee.
 - **Authority: Administrative**

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- **Consistency: Consistent.** MUCC has a long history of supporting species-specific plans and citizen-led advisory councils to bridge the gap between biologists and the public.
- **Proposal G: Aligns.** Strategic plans allow the DNR to set harvest limits based on regional data rather than statewide generalizations, supporting data-driven management.

2. Support Nighttime Bobcat Hunting with Calling Methods

- **Summary:** This resolution supports legalizing the use of calling methods—such as electronic or mouth calls—for hunting bobcats at night during the established season. Proponents argue this would expand hunting opportunities and provide an effective method for predator management.
- **Actions Required:** Lobby the NRC to amend the Wildlife Conservation Order (WCO) to legalize nighttime hunting using calls.
 - **Authority: NRC**
- **Consistency: Consistent.** This aligns with MUCC's principle of expanding hunter opportunities when they are not "to the detriment of the resource". It follows the precedent of supporting nighttime hunting for other species, such as porcupines (AC070614).
- **Proposal G: Aligns.** MUCC's support should be contingent on biological data showing that expanded nighttime harvest will not negatively impact the bobcat population.

3. Support Implementation of Bear Trapping

- **Summary:** This resolution advocates for the legal use of foothold cable restraints and/or cage-type live traps for the harvest of black bears. It seeks to provide wildlife managers and hunters with additional tools for population control.
- **Actions Required:** Advocate for the NRC to amend the WCO to authorize foothold cable restraints and/or cage traps for bear.
 - **Authority: NRC**
- **Legal Standing: Regulatory.** A review of current state law confirms there is no statutory prohibition in the Michigan Compiled Laws (MCL). The practice is currently prohibited only by omission in the NRC's WCO. Therefore, a statutory solution from the Legislature is **not required**.
- **Consistency: Consistent.** This supports MUCC's stance on providing diverse management tools for population control and increasing participation in the "consumptive sportsperson/resource relationship".
- **Proposal G: Aligns.** It follows Proposal G by advocating for an additional method of take to manage bear density, particularly in high-conflict areas while referencing data demonstrating the necessity for increased harvest.

4. Lobby Against Defunding of the USGS Bird Banding Laboratory (BBL)

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- **Summary:** This resolution directs MUCC to lobby the U.S. Department of the Interior to maintain full funding for the USGS Bird Banding Laboratory. The BBL is responsible for the data used to set migratory bird bag limits, making its operation critical for hunting regulations.
- **Actions Required:** Lobby the U.S. Department of the Interior to maintain funding for the BBL.
 - **Authority: Legislative (Federal)**
- **Consistency: Highly Consistent.** MUCC has historically advocated for robust data collection to inform harvest decisions.
- **Proposal G: Directly Supports.** Defunding the lab would undermine the "sound science" mandate by removing the raw data necessary for scientific management of waterfowl.

5. Balance Bear Numbers in Michigan's Upper Peninsula

- **Summary:** This resolution urges the DNR and NRC to adjust bear harvest quotas specifically to reach a target population of approximately 9,000 bears in the Upper Peninsula. It argues that current numbers are out of balance with the habitat.
- **Actions Required:** Urge the DNR/NRC to adjust harvest quotas to reach a population target of approximately 9,000 bears in the U.P.
 - **Authority: NRC**
- **Consistency: Consistent.** Aligns with MUCC's historical support for DNR-led population targets and the findings of the 9-year U.P. Predator/Prey Study.
- **Proposal G: Aligns.** This proposal draws upon multiple data points from more than one scientific source.

6. Deer Management Flexibility Across Michigan

- **Summary:** This resolution supports moving away from "one-size-fits-all" statewide deer hunting regulations in favor of regional flexibility in bag limits, methods of take, and season dates. It argues that regional management allows for better responses to local deer densities and habitat conditions.
- **Actions Required:** Advocate for regionalized management based on local needs rather than statewide uniformity.
 - **Authority: NRC**
- **Consistency: Consistent.** Aligns with recent policies (AC100324) calling for annually adjusted, Deer Management Unit (DMU)-level harvest goals.
- **Proposal G: Aligns.** It recognizes that different zones have different carrying capacities and disease pressures (like CWD), requiring tailored scientific approaches and calls upon the NRC utilize a more targeted scientific management approach by zone.

7. Specific Time Restrictions on the Usage of Crossbows

- **Summary:** This resolution proposes significant new restrictions on crossbow use, specifically prohibiting their use during the month of October in Zones 1 and 2, and restricting them to antlerless deer only in Zone 3 during October.

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- **Actions Required:** Lobby the NRC to amend the WCO to restrict October crossbow usage by zone and deer type.
 - **Authority: NRC**
- **Analysis of Inconsistency:** This proposal is in direct conflict with the **2016 MUCC Resolution (AC050616)**, which established the organization's current stance of neutrality and inclusion.
 - **The 2016 Precedent:** In 2016, MUCC moved to support full crossbow inclusion because the data at that time showed "**no significant conflict**" with the archery season. This was a science-based decision that prioritized hunter recruitment and retention over equipment preference.
 - **The 2026 Proposed Resolution:** The 2026 proposal argues that an "overharvest of bucks" has occurred specifically due to crossbow usage, necessitating a reversal of the 2016 policy.
- **Proposal G Gap:** To align with Proposal G, the convention should consider if there is new biological data proving a "significant conflict" or a threat to the resource that was not present in 2016.
 - Current Michigan DNR data indicates that while crossbow technology has advanced significantly since 2016, the biological claim of "overharvest" is not supported by population trends. Although crossbows now account for 67–75% of the archery harvest (up from 60% in 2016), the total annual deer harvest has remained stable due to a simultaneous decline in firearm hunter participation.
 - Furthermore, DNR reports from 2021–2024 show that the buck age structure is actually maturing, with 3.5-year-old bucks reaching record highs in the harvest. Because state wildlife agencies maintain there is no measurable negative biological impact on the herd, the "overharvest" argument appears to be a social or allocation conflict (hunter vs. hunter) regarding the timing of the harvest, rather than a biological necessity (hunter vs. resource) as defined by Proposal G.

Note to Proposed Resolution # 7: Pathways to Reconciling 2016 and 2025 Positions

If the 2026 resolution is adopted, a procedural conflict may arise because it directly contradicts the current standing policy established in **Resolution AC050616**, which mandates "Neutrality and Full Inclusion" of crossbows based on a "no significant conflict" finding. To address this, the organization might consider one of two pathways:

1. **Explicit Repeal:** The 2025 resolution can be adopted with an added "Repealer Clause" indicating that it replaces the previous policy. This provides the highest level of clarity for MUCC staff when testifying before the NRC, as it removes the conflicting "neutrality" language from the active policy manual.

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- **Sample Language:** "*BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC) hereby recognizes that the biological and technological context of deer management has evolved since 2016; and BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That this resolution shall explicitly supersede and repeal Resolution AC050616, becoming the primary standing policy of the organization regarding crossbow usage.*"

2. Conditional Amendment (Coexistence) The 2025 resolution can be amended to acknowledge the 2016 policy while framing the new restrictions as a necessary "technological update." This approach preserves the general spirit of the 2016 resolution while carving out specific, zone-based exceptions.

- **Sample Language:** "*BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That while MUCC maintains its general commitment to hunter recruitment and equipment neutrality as established in AC050616, the organization supports the specific October restrictions outlined in this resolution as a necessary technological adjustment to maintain healthy buck-to-doe ratios in the modern era.*"

Summary Table for 2025 Resolutions

#	Resolution	Core Authority	Consistency	Proposal G (Sound Science)
1	Panfish Committee	NRC/Admin	Consistent	Aligns: Data-driven management.
2	Night Bobcat Hunt	NRC	Consistent	Aligns: Opportunity vs. Resource health.
3	Bear Trapping	NRC	Consistent	Aligns: Science-based harvest tool.
4	Bird Banding Lab	Legislative	High	Supports: Essential data for science.
5	U.P. Bear Balance	NRC	Consistent	Aligns: Based on study findings.
6	Deer Flexibility	NRC	Consistent	Aligns: Regional carrying capacity.
7	Crossbow Limits	NRC	Inconsistent	Conflicts: Reverses 2016 "no conflict" policy.