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Happy New Year! 2013
GREAT LAKES REPORT: The Michigan Office of the Great Lakes released its annual State of the Great Lakes Report in mid-December. The report—compiled by the Office of the Great Lakes and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality—includes an introduction by Gov. Rick Snyder and discussions of such relevant topics as the sustainability of systems, water quality, water use, aquatic invasive species, Great Lakes Fisheries, coastal wetlands, localized restoration efforts and shared governance as key to the Great Lakes’ future. Overall, the focus is on cooperation and collaboration, and tangible improvements through restoration projects and partnerships.  

SLED DOGS AT MUSKALLONGE: The 14th Annual Tahquamenon Country Sled Dog Race was held January 5 at Muskallonge Lake State Park. The race, which had been held at the Rainbow Lodge on the mouth of the Two-Hearted River for the past 13 years, was changed due to the 2012 Duck Lake fire, which swept through the northern section of Lake County last spring, destroying the lodge and much of the trail system that the race had run on in prior years. 

WINTER CAMPING: A handful of select Michigan State Parks are offering a unique winter getaway experience—“yurts.” Yurts are sturdy, round tent-like structures that have become popular alternative lodging options for winter hikers and cross-country skiers. They are available at the Porcupine Mountains State Wilderness Area and Craig Lake State Park in the Upper Peninsula, as well as at the Pinckney and Waterloo Recreation Areas in the Lower Peninsula. They are equipped with bunk beds and mattresses, a table, chairs and wood stove. Cost is $60 per night, plus an $8 reservation fee. The yurts can accommodate four people.  

CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP: The Au Sable Institute of Environmental Studies near Mancelona, Michigan, continues to play a lead role in equipping Christian students for the important work of serving, protecting and restoring God’s earth. In 2012, Au Sable added an Applied Geographic Information Systems (GIS) course, grew its river research program and added two new graduate fellowship chapters at the University of Minnesota and the University of California-Berkeley, as well as 11 new graduate fellows. The institute is looking forward to continuing this work in 2013. For more information, or to contribute to the Au Sable Institute’s work, visit ausable.org.

FUR-BEARER REGISTRATION: Some Michigan conservationists are concerned that a series of bills being pushed by Gov. Rick Snyder could pave the way for additional mining operations in the state and make it harder for citizens and advocacy groups to stop these activities in environmentally sensitive areas. The governor signed the six-bill package revising the tax structure for mineral extraction in late December during a ceremony at the Rio Tinto Eagle Mine in Marquette County.

“This is not going to help our cause,” bemoaned one observer who is hoping to stop a proposed open-pit mining operation south of Newberry in the Upper Peninsula.

The legislation will place a 2.75 percent severance tax on gross mineral value on specified non-ferrous metallic minerals such as copper and nickel. The tax replaces the property tax, corporate income tax, sales tax and use tax on mining companies.

The bills allow 65 percent of the revenue from the severance tax to be retained by counties, townships, school districts and the school-aid fund, officials said. The remaining 35 percent would go into a rural development fund to support long-term regional economic opportunities, they said.

“This is phenomenal news for the people of the Upper Peninsula, who need more good-paying jobs that the mining industry can offer,” said outgoing state Rep. Matt Huuki (R-Atlantic Mine), who introduced the bills. “The tax reforms will lower start-up costs to encourage companies to locate here while protecting existing mining jobs.”

“This is transformational legislation that will have far-reaching implications,” added Sen. Tom Casperson (R-Escanaba) who helped get the legislation passed and was also on hand at the signing.

“It is simple, fair, and transparent. As such, it is sure to attract mining companies to explore and invest in the Upper Peninsula, creating good-paying jobs and inspiring economic development in the region.”

As appealing as good-paying jobs and economic development are, conservationists say that the last thing state forests and natural areas need are large-scale mining operations to scar the land and pollute the waters of the Upper Peninsula. Besides, they say, promised financial returns for local governments often don’t fully materialize and the State of Michigan stands to make the lion’s share of any profit. Supporters of the legislation, meanwhile, insist it is good for both local governments and new mining operations. Not only does it ease up-front costs for companies—they will no longer pay taxes until they start extracting minerals—but it also provides local communities with stabilized revenue for small townships throughout upper Michigan, they said.
Mary Lou Sheppard dies after battle with cancer

(Continued from Page 1)

and thought that she would have made it to go down so fast, but Mary Lou held up as well as could be expected and they had a Hospice team helping with her later.

As of this writing, no memorial edition in February of that year. The couple had a period of several years about the little Ellsworth restaurant they spent with her—both before and during the past several months.”

There seems to be somewhat of a mining renaissance in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula, as mineral exploration firms rush in to capitalize on high commodity prices. Critics say that mining could weaken the region. “The construction of the bridge is bound to have many ramifications for Michigan’s way of life. We hope to see the Upper Peninsula offers that.”

LONGBY PROJECT: One step closer to a new recreation area in Charlevoix. Timers Girl Scout Camp — will provide residents and visitors an opportunity to enjoy the Long Lake waterfront in a natural setting. It will also provide options for fishing, hiking, kite-flying, wildlife viewing and much more.

HUNTER EDUCATION AWARD: Richard Woodbury of Hart, Michigan, has been named the 2012 Volunteer Hunter Education Instructor by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Woodbury started teaching hunting safety in 1997 and serves with his wife, Melissa, as co-conference for the Upper Peninsula. The couple also conducts hunter education classes, but also assists other instructors in developing their classes and recruits additional teachers.

The New York Times, Rio Tinto, the world’s second-largest mining company, is going after nickel and copper near Big Bay and Marquette, and expects to start pulling ore out this year. Elsewhere in the world, HudBay Minerals, a public mining company, is pursuing an estimated $225 million project to mine precious and heavy metals, including, gold, silver, zinc and copper. And Orrvuna Minerals, a Canadian-based company, is seeking a location in another project near Ironwood that the firm says will create $2 billion in economic activity over 20 years.

The rush, too, searching for new ore deposits and studying known ones.

According to industry analysts, prices for copper, zinc, iron and other metals are likely to remain strong and continue to feed this flurry of activity. Among other things, opponents are worried about long-term damage to the environment and how sustainable a mining-led economic recovery would actually be. But supporters see it as a welcome comeback for an industry that historically helped shape the social and economic contours of the region.

Support has been particularly strong in the western U.P. community of Ironwood, according to reports, where dozens of iron ore mines once employed thousands of people. Many residents have hopes that some of those mining jobs might return— if only temporarily—to help reduce high unemployment rates.

Critics say that communities have exaggerated expectations for what mining will do for the local economy and warn that mining towns never succeed over the long haul. U.P. communities, they say, would be better off diversifying. Others say that mining could hurt water resources—especially Lake Superior—and that state and federal laws protecting these resources are inconsistent and inadequate.

The Keweenaw Bay Indian Community, meanwhile, reported that the United Nations last year to investigate and confirm an adequate. The Keweenaw Bay Indian Community, meanwhile, reported that the United Nations last year to investigate and confirm an adequate.
Law-abiding gun owners would be required to submit to photographs and fingerprinting under proposed Michigan legislation. But gun rights supporters and some of their supporters might have American citizens believe.

In addition to banning the sale, transfer, transport, or import of semi-automatic rifles, handguns and shotguns that can accept detachable magazines and/or fixed magazines that take more than ten rounds, the proposed law would outlaw large-capacity magazines, clips and drums capable of holding more than ten rounds.

What bothers guns rights advocates about all of that is the posed requirement for background checks, photographs and fingerprinting of anyone owning these types of weapons— including those who already legally possess them.

While such weapons obtained earlier under existing law would be “grandfathered” in for current owners, they would still have to be formally registered under the Federal Firearm Act. That includes “positive identification”— including photos and prisms— as well as certification from local law enforcement as to a person’s identity and the fact that he or her possesses a weapon that would not violate state or local law.

Guns targeted by U.S. lawmakers

More government spending would also be authorized, by providing dedicated funding to the DNR for the acquisition of Algonac, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives to implement registration.

National Rifle Association (NRA) LaPierre. “A gun is part of the problem and doesn’t like the media and all these high-profile politicians blaming him,” LaPierre said. “We remember NBC’s “Meet the Press” television show.

See Page 5 Viewpoint article in this issue for more information about this bill and some additional perspective from the National Rifle Association.

Governor vetoes concealed gun bill

Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder last month vetoed legislation that would have allowed concealed weapons in churches, schools and day care centers.

Senate Bill 59 would have permitted concealed pistol license holders who completed additional training to carry a concealed pistol in places that are currently off limits under Michigan law. It would have allowed the same person prohibited from possessing those places, while allowing permit holders to carry concealed weapons— unless the locations declared themselves weapons-free zones. Under the law, passed by only private venues could have opted out, as could college and universities with “constitutional autonomy,” according to the governor’s office.

Currently, Michigan law does not permit a concealed pistol license holder to carry a pistol in these zones.

While Snyder rejected Senate Bill 59, he did sign two other bills that streamline the process for handgun purchase and eliminate restrictions on interstate rifle and shotgun transactions to states contiguous to Michigan.

Snyder’s veto primarily was based on the legislation’s failure to let designated public entities— such as schools, day-care centers, hospitals and churches— opt out of the new concealed carry provisions.

“We must vigilantly protect the rights of law-abiding firearm owners, we also must protect the rights of designated public entities to exercise their best discretion in matters of safety and security,” the governor said. “This submitted bill would opt-out authority to ban firearms on their premises if they see fit to do so.”

Snyder said he more closely scrutinized the bill in the wake of December’s elementary school mass murder and said such secondary acts are usually numerous and complex. With that in mind, we must consider legislation like Senate Bill 59 in a holistic manner.

“While the bill’s goal is to help prevent needless violence, Michigan will be better served if we view it through a different lens,” the governor said. “A thoughtful review that examines issues such as school emergency policies, disenfranchised youth and mental health services may lead to more answers and better safeguards.”

Michigan firearm purchases

The two gun-related bills that Snyder did sign were House Bill 2599 and Senate Bill 984.

Under House Bill 5225, sponsored by Rep. Paul O’Ponsmar (R-Dewitt), the permit to purchase was retained for non-concealed pistol license holders who wish to purchase a handgun through a personal person to person sale.

The Michigan Pistol Database, managed by the State Police, is also retained under the law and citizens can obtain a permit to purchase a handgun at any law enforcement agency, rather than only at their local sheriff’s department. Under existing law, individuals who have a permit to purchase a handgun will now have 30 days, rather than ten days, to make the purchase.

Snyder eliminated the requirement for obtaining a permit to purchase for all handgun sales that occur through a federally licensed firearms dealer.

Senate Bill 294, sponsored by Sen. Tom Casperson (R-Escanaba), eliminates the restrictions on interstate gun purchases to states that are non-contiguous to Michigan. Currently, Michigan residents may purchase rifles and shotguns in any contiguous state if they conform to the Federal Gun Control Act, the regulations issued under the Act and the laws of the state in which the purchase is made.

Forest plan review period extended

Due to the complexity and importance of draft Regional State Forest Management Plans, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources extended the public review and comment period through March 8, 2013. The DNR developed the three draft plans—which cover the eastern Upper Peninsula, the western Upper Peninsula and the northern Upper Peninsula—by seeking input from a diverse group of stakeholders. This group represented government organizations, outdoor recreation, the forest industry, and other interested citizens.

Once finalized, the plans will provide long-term, landscape-level direction for resource managers that “will guide DNR decisions about activities and treatments on state forest land,” DNR officials said.

“Review of the plans has been under way since early October,” said Bill O’Neill, chief of the DNR’s Forest Resources Division. “While we’ve already received great feedback, some interested individuals and organizations have asked for more time.”

The extension also gives the DNR an opportunity to update the draft plans in response to public comments, DNR officials said. The update will provide a larger number of harvest acres for a number of species, including aspen, said O’Neill.

Those with comments should submit them either via e-mail to DNRforestplans@mdnr.state.mich.us, or by mail to DNR Forest Resources Division, Forest Planning and Operations Section, P.O. Box 30452, Lansing, Michigan 48909-7052.
Guns and Outlaws

When Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder vetoed legislation that would have allowed concealed weapons in churches, schools and other places of worship, it was understandable. After all, it’s difficult to make a coherent argument in favor of broader gun rights in the face of what occurred recently at the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut.

Yet, it is equally incoherent to suggest, as some have, that guns in and of themselves—a mere mechanical assembly of steel, triggers and barrels—are somehow responsible for the darkness found in human hearts.

Age may have something to do with this changing attitude—or maybe the general wisdom is that supposed to come with it. Cold is not as it is sometime years worn for a warm beach in Aruba.

Not that windswept snow and growing days are all bad. There’s something about winter that speaks joyfully of physical, emotional and spiritual renewal. And spring wouldn’t be nearly as glorious if it wasn’t for the frigid weather that precedes it.

As an adult, snowshoeing is one of my favorite outdoor activities. It is peaceful, exhilarating and filled with benefits for the heart and lungs. As a kid, there was nothing like riding a flexible Flyer down a steep, snow-covered embankment, or forming a conga line on a icy pond on a new pair of ice skates that came wrapped in paper and some wax from the hardware store.

But shoveling sidewalks and driveways when I’d rather be doing something else—or helpfully watching my $30 vehicle be eaten alive by excessive county road salt—just don’t fit into my current definition of fun. It could well be the length and incline of my driveway that soured my mood toward winter, or maybe I just come by it naturally.

For as long as I can remember, my father has ranted and raved against the man who killed a kid—when I didn’t have any thing better to do than jump out of trees into snowdrifts. I didn’t quite understand this annual hassle topolis radiating and crunching of steel tire chains as the old Ford yanked us along the rural byways near our home.

Once, an eccentric neighbor did something similar for my friends and me during an off-road adventure that found our sleds delivered to her horse. That was the only thing that saved me, because each rider had to hook his feet into the next sled to pull it along. I was in front—directly behind the horse hearing the collective weight of the other sleds, holding on tight with my hands and feet, trying to make sure my face from clumps of hard-packed snow thrown from the horse’s hooves.

Ah, I remember—although I was probably easier to take in the far northern parts of Michigan, where there gener ally seems to be more snow and better snow. In many downstate locations, the snow too often seems wet, dirty and unappealing compared to the pure white fluffiness that one encounters in the true north woods.

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Feinstein goes for broke with new gun-ban bill

The following opinion piece was issued as a legislative update by the National Rifle Association and should be considered to many North Woods Readers call.

Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-California) – author of the federal “assault weapon” and “large” ammunition magazine ban of 1994-2004 – has announced that on the first day of the new Congress, January 3, she will introduce a bill to which her 1994 ban will pale compared to.

On Dec. 17, Feinstein said, “I have been working with my staff for over a year on this legislation” and “It will be carefully focused.”

Indicating the depth of her research on the issue, she said on Dec. 21st that she had personally looked at pictures of guns in 1993, and again in 2012. According to an Dec. 27th posting on her site, Feinstein’s website and a draft of the bill by the (National Rifle Association), there would be another bill, among other things, adopt new definitions of “assault weapon” that would af

f Tamayo, 1993 and new gun-ban bill

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ffect a much larger variety of firearms, require current owners of such firearms to register them upon the deaths of their firearms, require current owners of the number of permitted external features.

With the federal government

The new ban would, among other things, adopt new definitions of "assault weapon" and require the current owners of such firearms to register them with the federal government under the National Firearms Act, and with the forfeiture of the firearms upon the deaths of their current owners. Some of the changes in Feinstein’s new bill are as follows:

• Reduces, from two to one, the number of permitted external features. The 1994 ban permitted various firearms to be manufactured only if they were assembled with no more than one feature listed in the law. Feinstein’s new bill would prohibit the manufacture of the same firearms with even one of the features.

• Adopts new lists of prohibited external features. For example, whereas the 1994 ban applied to a rifle or shotgun, the “pistol grip” of which Itcoronerspiciously beneath the action of

thefewarmerinchange and in conjunction with the reduction from two features to one, the new language would apply to every detachable-magazine semi-automatic rifle. At a minimum, it would, for example, ban all models of the AR-15, even those developed for compliance with California’s highly restrictive ban.

• Carries hyperbole further than ever before. Feinstein’s 1994 ban listed “grenade launcher” as one of the prohibitory features. In her 2013 bill goes even further into the ridiculous, by also listing “rocket launcher.” Such devices are restricted under the National Firearms Act and, obviously, are not standard components of the firearms Feinstein wants to ban.

• Banning or a “muzzle-breaking” feature that, under Feinstein’s bill, would add “nuclear charge,” “particle beam weapon,” or some

thing else equally far-fetched to the features list.

• Expands the definition of "assault weapons" by including: 4) Three very popular rifles, centerfire, or rifle with a fixed magazine that has the capacity to accept more than 10 rounds; and 4) "Assault weapons" would remain.

• Requires owning of excess "assault weapons" to register them with the federal government. Under the National Firearms Act (NFA). The NFA imposes a $200 tax per firearm, and requires an owner to register them with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (BATFE), to inform the BATFE of the address where the firearm will be kept, and to obtain the BATFE’s permission to transport the firearm across state lines.

• Prohibits the transfer of "assault weapons." Owners of other firearms, including those covered by the NFA, are permitted to sell them or pass them to heirs. How-

ever, under Feinstein’s new bill, “assault weapons” would remain with their current owners until their deaths, at which point they would be forfeited to the govern-

• Prohibits the domestic man-

ufacture and the importation of magazines that hold more than 10 rounds of ammunition. The 1994 ban allowed the importation of such magazines that were manu-

factured before 1994. However, the 1994 ban protected gun owners from errant prosecution by making the gov-

ernment prove when a magazine was made, the new ban includes no such protection. The new ban also requires firearm dealers to certify the date of manufacture of any larger than 10-round magazine sold, a nearly impossible task, given that virtually no mag.

(Continued on Page 6)

2013 lake sturgeon season starts Feb. 2

Lake sturgeon fishing and spearfishing on Black Lake in Cheboygan County will begin at 8 a.m. Saturday, February 2. All anglers must register to participate — but just once for the entire season.

Early registration is from 2 to 8 p.m. Friday, January 18, at the DNR Onaway Field Station. Those unable to register at that time may register the first day of the season at either the entrance booth to Onaway State Park, or a registration trailer located on Zol-

ner Road at Black Lake.

Gov. Snyder signs bill that opens door to wolf hunting

Michigan is another step closer to wolf hunting under a new law signed in late December by Gov. Rick Snyder. Under the law, the Michigan Natural Resources Commission has the authority to establish hunt-

ing seasons for the wolf. And the Commission was expected to get an update on the once-endangered species at its regular meeting this month. The Humane Society and other opponents have been fighting the legislation for the past few months. A number of Native American tribes in Michigan are among those against wolf hunting, because the animal holds a special status among tribal members and figures prominently in their cre-

ation stories.

The number of wolves in Michigan has rebounded sharply since wildlife experts say, compared to just under 300 a decade ago. The population has reportedly grown since the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in cooperation with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, has been working to restore the species to the Lower Peninsula. The law had been sponsored by State Rep. Tom Plumley and required the Natural Resources Commission to conduct a study of the pros and cons of wolf hunting.

Since the wolf was reintroduced in the Lower Peninsula, the species has rebounded strongly. The law signed by Snyder applies to counties with at least 50 wolves. The Department of Natural Resources estimates there are at least 300 wolves in Michigan, up from just 35 in the early 1990s. Wolf hunting is legal in several states, including Minnesota, Wisconsin and Montana. The Michigan game and fish agency outlawed the killing of wolves four decades ago to keep them from going extinct in the Lower 48 states.
Here’s a thoughtful book by the late writer and noted Civil War authority Bruce Catton that lovers of northern Michigan and those troubled by the ever-growing influence of modern technology will want to read. It is simultaneously a boyhood account of the “progress” of men—a story centered in Benzie County and the adjacent region along Lake Michigan’s eastern shore.

Catton grew up in Benzie, a community built around a tiny, unpaved college, which later became an academy from which the author graduated in 1916.

The progress that mattered in those days was more moral and spiritual than material, and the lessons learned there shaped Caton’s values and perspective throughout life.

Like many of us, Catton was worried about such things as environmental decay, toxic pollution and nuclear holocaust. But what troubled him most was that people had apparently placed their faith in advancing technology, relinquishing control over it and mortgaging their future to it with the same trust that earlier generations had placed in God.

“The trouble with that kind of advance is that there is no end to it,” he wrote. “Development becomes compulsive. It is never possible to call a halt. Once you have taken the first step, you have committed yourself to take the last—some day—even if the last step goes straight off the edge of a precipice.

“The age of applied technology has one terrible aspect—each new technique has to be exploited to its absolute limit, until man becomes the victim of his own work.”

The author laments the perverseness of automobiles and the “death” of Michigan’s wilderness at the hands of the lumber barons, who in the final third of the 19th century were directing an industry that “had ceased to be limited by the strength of man’s biceps and the power of running water.”

“In an unplanned, clumsy, un-recognized way (advances in technology) had led the lumbermen up to the edge of the hardly most dangerous knowledge men had ever had—the knowledge that all the old limitations are gone and that quite literally he can do whatever he wants to do,” Catton wrote.

There was something about the north country, the author observed, that issued disquieting warnings about all this.

“To the south was the land of the mound builders,” he said, “whose best efforts produced nothing but unsatisfactory scars on the earth; and about us (northern Michigan) were the bleak acres of stamp, the dying towns and the desolate farms that were being given over—discarded in a game where most where the players had lost. Now and then, these things demanded thought.”

Catton pointed to Sleeping Bear Dunes as something that looks eternal, but is not. The area’s constantly shifting sand dunes shows that the earth is still being remodeled and hints that “the spirit back of the remodeling may be worth knowing.”

What protected man in the old days, Catton said, was his awareness that there were things he just could not do.

“Today, however, we can go anywhere and do anything,” he wrote, “and because the fabulous machine we have created can neither be reversed, put in neutral, nor turned aside, we have to go and do to the utmost limit, which is as likely as not to be our own destruction.”

(Continued from Page 5)

azines are stamped with their date of manufac- ture.

• Targets handguns in defiance of the Supreme Court. The court ruled in District of Columbia v. Heller that the Second Amendment protects the right to bear arms for self-defense, in large part on the basis of the fact handguns are the type of firearm “overwhelmingly chosen by Amer- icans for that lawful purpose.” Semi-automatic pistols, which are the most popular handguns today, are designed to use detachable magazines, and the magazines “overwhelmingly chosen” by Americans for self-defense are those that hold more than 10 rounds. Additionally, Feinstein’s list of nearly 1,000 firearms exempted by name (see next paragraph) contains not a single handgun. Sen. Feinstein advocated banning handguns before being elected to the Senate, though she can call a handgun for her own personal protection.

• Contains a larger piece of window damage than the 1994 ban. Whereas the 1994 ban included a list of approximately 600 rifles and shotguns exempted from the ban by name, the new bill’s list is increased to nearly 1,000 rifles and shotguns. Other than for the 11 detachable-magazine semi-automatic rifles and one other semi-auto- matic rifle included in the list, the list appears to be pointless, because a separate provision of the bill exempts “any firearm that is manually operated by bolt, pump, lever, or side-action trigger.”

On her website, Feinstein claims that a study for the DOJ found that the 1994 ban reduced 4.5 percent in gun murders. To the contrary, this is what the study said: “At best, the assault weapons ban can have only a limited effect on total gun mur- ders, because the banned weapons and mag- azines were never involved in more than a modest fraction of all gun murders. Our best estimate is that the ban contributed to a 6.7 percent decrease in total gun murders between 1994 and 1995. However, with only one year of post-ban data, we cannot rule out the possibility that this decrease reflects change year-to-year variation rather than a true effect of the ban. Nor can we rule out the effects of other provisions of the 1994 Crime Act, or a host of state and local initiatives that took place simultaneously.”

From the imposition of Feinstein’s “assault weapon” ban (Sept. 13, 1994) through the present, the number of “assault weapons” has risen dramatically. For example, the most common firearm that Feinstein con- siders an “assault weapon” is the AR-15 rifle, the manufacturing numbers of which can be gleaned from the BATFE’s firearm manufacturer reports. From 1995 through 2011, the number of AR-15s—all models of which Feinstein’s new bill defines as “as- sault weapons”—rose by over 2.5 million. During the same period, the nation’s murder rate fell 48 percent, to a 48-year low. Ac- cording to the FBI, 8.5 times as many peo- ple are murdered with knives, blunt objects and bare hands, as with rifles of any type.

Feinstein makes several claims, premised on firearm traces, hoping to convince people that her 1994 ban reduced the (relatively in- frequent) use of “assault weapons” in crime. However, traces do not indicate how often any type of gun is used in crime. As the Congressional Research Service and the BATFE have explained, not all firearms that are traced have been used in crime, and not all firearms used in crime are traced. Whether a trace occurs depends on whether a law enforcement agency requests that a trace be conducted. Given that existing “as- sault weapons” were exempted from the 1994 ban and new “assault weapons” con- tinued to be made while the ban was in ef- fect, any reduction in the percentage of traces accounted for by “assault weapons” during the ban would be attributable to law enforcement agencies losing interest in trac- ing the firearms, or law enforcement agen- cies increasing their requests for traces on other types of firearms, as urged by the BATFE for more than a decade.

Call your U.S. senators and representa- tive. As noted, Feinstein (intended to intro- duce her bill on January 3rd, President Obama has said that gun control will be a “central issue” of his final term in office, and he has vowed to move quickly on it. Call your members of Congress at 202- 224-3122 to urge them to oppose Sen. Fein- stein’s and gun gun magazine ban. Our elected representatives in Congress must hear from you if we are going to defeat this gun ban proposal. You can also write or e-mail your members and representatives to ex- press your opinion

—The National Rifle Association
Guy Kistler: An insistent voice for better water quality

Michigan water quality may be much better today than in years past, but it has taken continued vigilance by generations of conservationists to make that happen. And there’s still more to be done.

For more than a half-century, Battle Creek native Guy Kistler was at the forefront of efforts to clean up southwest Michigan’s Kalamazoo River and bring about stricter water pollution control laws in the state. Year after year, Kistler studied and lectured about the river and the growing problem of water pollution across the state. He faced off with the so-called Lansing bu-reaucrats and lobbied hard to get “more teeth” in Michigan’s anti-pollution laws. Along the way, he was named 1969 “Water Conservationist of the Year” by the Michigan United Conservation Clubs and “National Water Conservationist of the year” by the National Wildlife Federation.

But he collected more notoriety than honors.

“A lot of people in this area imagine, the paper mills didn’t like me a bit,” Kistler told North Woods Call editor Mike VanBuren during a mid-1980s interview for the Kalamazoo Gazette.

One paper mill executive threatened to take his company and all his pollution with him if the river were “cleaned up.” He was going to fight. I didn’t know who, but I was going to fight whoever it was going to fight. I didn’t know why, but I was going to fight somebody."

Through the years, he became a tough campaigner for a clean environment. “After a while, you get hardened,” Kistler said. “You aren’t afraid of anybody or anything. … I didn’t care who I talked to, or how big they were. Anybody who tried to be dignified and nice on a deal like that was making a big mistake, because there’s nothing nice about pollution.”

Kistler lamented that it was sometimes frustrating that other individuals and organizations did not offer more help. “Frankly, I fought the battle alone (much of the time),” he said. “It was awfully hard to get anyone into this at all.”

But Kistler said he was satisfied with the results of his efforts. “There are laws in Michigan now that will take care of any situation—if you can get anybody to enforce them.”

Kistler finally passed the torch to a new generation of water conservationists during the mid-1970s. Even then, he didn’t believe that one of his most passionate concerns—the Kalamazoo River—would ever be fully restored. “I can’t see where it will ever be cleaned up to its natural state,” Kistler said prior to his death in 1990.

His reason: the sticky, toxic sludge that covered the river bottom in some places several feet deep. “That’s why I say, with that messy pollution, it will never wash out,” he said. “The only way to ever clean it is to dredge it out, and it would cost millions of dollars to do that. There are tons and tons of it. Even if they dredged it out, where would they put it? People are not going to want to spend millions of dollars in taxes to do that.”

Nevertheless, Kistler continued to encourage others to carry on the fight. “What a wonderful thing it would be if the river were a clean river,” he said. “People could build homes along it, swim and fish like they used to. But as long as there are individuals who want to destroy something, decent things can never happen.”

What happened to the CO field reports? When this issue of The North Woods Call was being compiled, a fresh collection of bi-monthly conservation officer field reports was not readily available from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. To keep to our production schedule, we decided to not include them in this issue. The CO briefs will return next time. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause, but hope you enjoy a couple of the other things on this page.

Outdoor Rhythms

Protecting Habitat

We Michiganders are big on enjoying our outdoor resources, and many of us have an appreciation of what’s needed to maintain them. Despite the currently fashionable outcries against “intensive govern- ment,” my in-person observations have led me to believe that a well-run Department of Natural Resources—with all of its scientific, educational, and enforcement capabilities—is a critical line of defense for the environment.

Think what our state would be like without that venerable taxpayer-funded agency. Unscrupulous people (ever met any of them?) would quickly strip our land and waters of game and fish, with no thought of renewal. I’ve seen this happen in several locations where enforcement was cut back, usually due to lack of funding. The results were not pretty.

In the face of this, bad actors even started removing trees illegally for profit, leaving patches of denuded countryside (aka, a degraded habi- tat). Not catastrophic in small areas, but if no one is around to stop such activity it can become ruinous.

Pollution also damages the living things we depend on. Private compa- nies and even some communities are often desperate to achieve cost reductions, and few things lead to that end more rapidly than a disregard for pollution laws. Dumping toxic waste into rivers and lakes used to be a common practice until government regulations were formulated and enforced.

Private individuals and groups have worked diligently to become edu- cated about such issues and to act as watchdogs in this area. The very possibility of being observed and identified tends to keep “bad guys” in check.

As a former lab person and industrial chemist, I have some under- standing of the dangers posed by chemicals escaping into the environment. Fracking operations, we are learning, may poison and make unavailable for use millions of gallons of water for literally thousands of years. In the event of excessive leakage or migration, toxic com- pounds can cause local aquifers to become undrinkable, and sometimes flammable.

Give me a strong regulatory agency any day—one that works honestly to protect resources for the long-term good of everyone. Profit-making and job creation are vital, but we have to be smart enough to do those things with minimal harm to plants, animals and people.

Private citizens—besides being an important set of eyes dedicated to preserving habitats—contribute effort and money to many worthy conservation organizations.

It’s all about saving our fields and forests, backyards and empty lots, wherever and whenever we can. Landowners can help by not over-developing their property, planting trees and food plants for wildlife, putting up brush piles in strategic locations, reducing all forms of erosion, and avoiding the use of synthetic fertilizers and lawn products as much as possible.

Government and people working toward the same goals. Simple action plans. An innate respect for an environment that we depend on much more than we usually realize. The enhancement of hunting and fishing opportunities, as well as the traditional outdoor aesthetics that have always made Michigan a great place to be. Those are things we need to keep working on.

May our wild areas always remain so.
A Stormy Legend

Frigid winter winds bring warm thoughts of the legendary Stormy Kromer cap—a gargantuan replica of which can be found on the outskirts of Ironwood in Michigan’s western Upper Peninsula. The venerable headgear was introduced in 1903, and has been a staple among outdoorsmen and railroad workers for generations. The “windproof” caps were the brainchild of George “Stormy” Kromer, a semi-pro baseball player and one-time engineer on the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad. Kromer reportedly made many long, cold trips across the Great Plains and often had to stick his head out the window of a steam locomotive to see where he was going. After the prairie winds stole his cap numerous times, Kromer asked his wife, Ida—an excellent seamstress—to modify an old baseball cap to better keep it on his head. Ida obliged, the story goes, making a six-panel cap with flaps that could be pulled over the ears. Soon other railroad workers wanted the cap, too, and when Ida could no longer keep up with the demand, George hired a few employees and a business was born. The caps were first mass-produced at factories in Milwaukee and Kaukauna, Wisconsin, but the company was purchased by Jacquart Fabric Products in 2001 and the operation was moved to Ironwood. Today, residents of the Gogebic Iron Range sew new Stormy Kromer Caps in a factory near this display.

The “bringers of winter”

Migration Day: The majesty of the tundra swan

By Doug Reeves
Assistant Chief
Wildlife Division
Michigan Department of Natural Resources

November 12 was Veteran’s Day, but it was also a spectacular migration day. A strong cold front came across mid-Michigan during the early morning hours, accompanied by rain. The rain ended about noon and the temperature dropped from the low 50s into the upper 30s. The rain ended about noon and the temperature dropped from the low 50s into the upper 30s. Sure enough, on the morning of November 13, the swans were flying. It was truly spectacular. And migrate they did!

I wish I knew how many flew overhead within a two-mile radius of my place that morning. I have observed significant swan migrations as early as November 4 and as late as the Thanksgiving weekend. I have come to think of tundra swans as the “bringers of winter.” They migrate overhead just before things turn very cold and snow starts to appear. Sure enough, on the morning of November 13, the top and windshield of the car were snow-covered. Soon the ponds would be covered with ice.

But the swans will return again in March. At some point—shortly after the ice-out—several thousand swans will stop over at Saginaw Bay on their way back north. You might want to make a visit to the east side of the bay about then to see and hear a true natural spectacle.

Winter advice

Keeping safe in the outdoors

Being outdoors in the winter requires more attention to safety than at other times of the year. Simply getting wet—or getting lost in the woods—is much more significant when the temperature plummets into the single digits. The best advice, according to Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) officials, is to make sure someone knows where you’re going, what you’re doing and when you’ll be back.

Tell them your planned travel route and expected time of arrival or return,” said the DNR’s Corporal John Morey. “Then, if someone is overdue, whoever has the travel plan can contact 911 and give responders a chance to get out and look for them right away.

Ice should always be checked out carefully, according to Morey. Always avoid areas where the ice is discolored, or there is vegetation and other objects sticking up through it. Use a spud to punch the ice ahead of you as you walk. Use a rope in case someone breaks through.

It is also recommended that anglers carry spikes—ideally enclosed in wood or plastic cylinders for handles—so they can grasp the ice with them if they break through.

Breaking through the ice into freezing water is extremely serious, Morey said. Anyone immersed in icy water must get his or her head above the surface immediately, get breathing under control, attempt to breathe normally and work on getting out. Get to good ice (generally in the direction from which you came) and place your arms up on the ice. Use your arms to pull your upper body onto the ice while you kick your legs in a swimming motion.

If you succeed in getting out, initially roll or crawl along the ice. Do not get back on your feet right away until you are sure you are on safe ice. Then immediately walk toward heated shelter.

If you are unable to get out of the water, reach out as far as you can, hold on and yell for help.

“If you see someone falls through the ice, make sure you do not put yourself at risk when attempting to assist them,” said Morey. “Call 911 immediately.”

When attempting to reach someone who has fallen through the ice, distribute your body weight by laying on the ice. Toss a rope, or reach for them with a pole, stick, or ladder. Don’t compound the problem by breaking through the ice yourself.

“Outdoor recreation can be enjoyable, invigorating and fun,” Morey said, “but, for it to be any of those things, it must also be—first and foremost—safe.”

—DNR Report

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