LICENSE SALE INTERRUPTION: An upgrade to a state computer system will interrupt the sale of hunting, fishing, snowmobile, off-road vehicle and assorted other licenses from 11:30 p.m. Monday, Feb. 18, through 1 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 21. Online license sales, as well as vital state records, will continue during this time.

HARBOR DREDGING: Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder has called for spending $2.15 million or more this year to dredge Michigan harbors in danger of losing their connections to open water because of low Great Lakes levels. The proposal was included in the governor’s 2013-14 budget and is part of a broader initiative being developed by state agencies to help water-starved harbors, as the federal government cuts back on dredging and the lakes continue declining because of drought and warm temperatures that boost evaporation rates.

NRC MEETINGS: The Michigan Natural Resources Commission (NRC) will hold its next meeting March 14 at the Saginaw Field and Stream Conservation Club, 1296 North Gleaner Road in Saginaw. On April 11, commissioners will gather at the Michigan State University Diagnostic Center, 415 Beaumont Road in Lansing. On May 9, the NRC meeting will move north again to the Ralph A. MacMullan Conference Center on Higgins Lake, 104 Conservation Drive, Roscommon. Agendas and minutes can be found on the Michigan Department of Natural Resources website.

LAKE SUPERIOR LEVEL: The level of Lake Superior dropped two inches in January, a month when Gitchee Gumee usually drops about three inches, according to the International Lake Superior Board of Control.

SLEEPING BEAR LEGISLATION: The U.S. Senate in late December passed legislation preserving nearly half of the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore as wilderness. The bill, which was of this writing had yet to pass the U.S. House of Representatives, designates about 32,557 acres of the 71,199-acre lakeshore as wilderness under the National Wilderness Preservation System.

MUSKEGON CLEANUP: The Marathon Petroleum Company has agreed to begin cleanup of oil byproducts at the long-closed Old Dutch/Aurora refinery site in Muskegon Township, Michigan. The toxic pollution under the 100-acre site near Laketon Avenue and Walker Road has contaminated downstream groundwater, as well as a county drain the empties into the Mona Lake Watershed. The method, timetable and thoroughness of the proposed cleanup had not yet been revealed at the time of this writing.

MICHIGAN ROAD BANNED: Michigan officials have declined to grant a permit for a new road near the Rio Tinto Eagle Mine in the Upper Peninsula’s Marquette County. Regulators are concerned about damage to wetlands and wildlife habitat, they said. The Marquette County Road Commission had proposed building the 21-mile link between the nickel-copper mine—which is currently under construction—and U.S. 41. In lieu of the proposed road project, the company will likely transport its commodity in ore on an existing roadway network that runs along the northern end of Marquette before stretching south to U.S. 41 west of town.

RESEARCH PROPOSALS: Michigan Sea Grant is soliciting research proposals for funding of projects focused on the following issues: 1) keeping the highways of the sea open, 2) habitat enhancement and the Grand River, 3) Great Lakes education, 4) sustaining small harbors, 5) muck in Saginaw Bay, and 6) bird die-offs and botulism. Pre-proposals are due Feb. 22 and selected invitations for full proposals will be sent March 18. For details, visit misagrant.umich.edu.

LIME ISLAND HOSTS: If you’re looking for a challenge to your skills, the Michigan DNR is recruiting outdoor recreation enthusiasts to be summer campground hosts at the Lime Island State Recreation Area. The 980-acre island is located in the St. Mary’s River Navigation Channel, three miles offshore at the eastern end of the Upper Peninsula. For information, contact Straits State Park at (906) 643-8620, or Miguel Rodriguez at 517-241-4129.

INLAND SHORELINES: A workshop to help inland lakefront property owners create, restore and manage natural shorelines will be held March 16 at Michigan State University. Cost is $45 per person on or before March 8, 2013. Final registration deadline is March 13. For details, contact: Bindu Bhakta at (248) 858-5198, or send an e-mail to bhaktab@anr.msu.edu.

Michigan’s Conservation Sentinel Since 1953

With public comment being solicited on Michigan’s Regional State Forest Management Plans through March 8, conservation-minded citizens have an opportunity to challenge legislation that would restrict the ability of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to consider “biodiversity” when managing these resources.

“You should be paying attention to what the Legislature is doing right now,” said Brad Garmon, director of conservation and emerging issues at the Michigan Environmental Council (MEC). “They’re redefining conservation in a different way than it has been understood for one hundred years of Michigan’s conservation legacy.”

The bill, which remained on tap for Senate action at the time of this writing, would amend the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act of 1994 to do the following:

* Revise the definition of “conservation” with regard to biological diversity, removing key provisions about restoration, distribution and the “continued existence” of native species and communities.

* Prohibit the DNR, the state Natural Resources Commission and other state agencies from promulgating or enforcing any rule or order that designates or classifies an area of land specifically for the purpose of achieving or maintaining biological diversity.

* Delete the conservation of biological diversity from the DNR’s duties in respect to forest management, and require the DNR to balance its management activities with economic values.

* Eliminate a requirement that the DNR manage forests in a manner that promotes restoration.

* Delete a legislative finding that most losses of biological diversity are the result of human activity.

The MEC opposes this bill for a variety of reasons:

“Michigan is blessed with a wide variety of native plant and animal species and communities,” said James Clift, the organization’s policy director, in a February 4 “Capitol Update” memo. “These are assets that must be actively protected. The stewardship of threatened and endangered species, the protection... (Continued on Page 2)
Forest plan biodiversity comments encouraged

(Continued from Page 1)

of functioning natural communities, and the restoration of native plants and wildlife are concepts that date back more than one hundred years in Michigan.

Clift said the DNR is “right and justified in de-

ploying the best scientific and professional expertise available to ensure that the biodiversity management initiatives might need for Michigan.”

This unbiased, science-based study will investigate not only the potential threats and vulnerabilities of hydraulic fracturing, but also the potential air quality and economic benefits of using the domestic low-cost natural gas produced by hydraulic fracturing for electrical generation and manufacturing,” said Andrew Hoffman, a researcher and director of the Erb Institute. “In the end, our goal is to provide valuable insights and information to help address these important and legitimate concerns here in the Great Lakes State. As part of the investigation, research teams are soliciting public input through an online comment form on the Government Institute Website.

2012 a safer hunting season

Michigan’s 2012 hunting season saw only one fatality in the 15 incidents reported, Department of Natural Resources (DNR) officials said.

That makes it the safest season in the last five years, they said.

By comparison, there were 12 incidents with fatalities during the 2011 season, 14 incidents with three fatalities in 2010, 18 in 2009, 22 incidents with two fatalities in 2008 and 32 incidents with two fatalities in 2007.

DNR Law Enforcement Division chief Gary Hagler credits the 2011 season, 14 incidents with three fatalities in 2010, 18 in 2009, 22 incidents with two fatalities in 2008 and 32 incidents with two fatalities in 2007.

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He’s usually sitting in the “burg’s” restaurant waiting for school to let out so he may visit with the boys.

School is something that has been taken away from Danny. Once, many years ago, he went for a brief period of time to a special school in Detroit, but it was for a very brief time and he could hardly remem-

ber what it was like.

Now he’s in school again and has taken on a richer meaning. Danny is the 23-year-old son of Mrs. Harriet Dreffs, hostess at Ed’s Village Inn, which she and her husband operate. And Danny is a victim of cerebral palsy resulting from a birth injury.

Little four-corner north woods towns don’t have the wonderful, modern facilities the big cities have for handicapped boys and girls, but Johannesburg found a way to help.

When it became known that Mrs. Dreffs wanted a tutor to help

Danny with his reading—so his narrow world could be widened—

the burg’s school supplied the need.

Mrs. Mary Kasky, who teaches the little folks, said she thought Danny should be right in her classroom. There he could receive more individual attention than in the higher grades and he wouldn’t feel that he was being pushed in a competitive way that might be pretty hard.

Comes the hour when Danny is to have his reading lessons, School Superintendent Charles Hamilton sends some of the big boys over to dth him. They carefully carry Danny and his special wheelchairs to the school, where his one-on-one teacher is waiting.

Ability to read the big words, he will find the hours won’t pass so slowly while he waits for the boys after school to play cards with him. And the TV set also helps bring the larger world to him now.

He saw the pigeons darken the sky

I’ve seen the sky filled with pigeons—so many pigeons that you couldn’t see the sky. Delos E. Michael said. “You could take a fish pole and knock them down when they flew low over the house.

This week, he looks back to those days around 1865 when the sky over Dennison, west of Grand Rapids, was filled with the beating wings of the pigeons. They may have been the last of the great pas-

senger pigeons that nested in those years around Petoskey.

Now extinct, few men are alive today who can recall witnessing those tremendous flights.

“There were millions of them,” the old man said.

On March 1, Michael will celebrate his 94th birthday. Sitting in Mae’s Variety Store, operated by his granddaughter in Johannesburg, he is still sitting in the chair that he filled with his comings and goings in the store with blue eyes alert and sparkling.

He is quick with a joke, an avid reader of fiction, and a dyed-in-the-wood baseball fan. “I made my own living since I was nine,” he said.

Our 60th Year: Looking Back to Feb. 24, 1954

—Excerpts from The North Woods Call

School bell rings for Danny

Danny is going to school.

Everybody around Johannesburg knows Danny. They know his peculiar grin, his little jokes, his interest in what they are doing and where they have been.

He’s usually sitting in the “burg’s” restaurant waiting for school to let out so he may visit with the boys.

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Ford Kellum was a lifelong passion for protecting natural resources against all manner of assault.

And the late Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) wildlife biologist remained in the western Upper Peninsula—say they need hunting and trapping to keep wolf numbers in check.

If approved by the Michigan Legislature, it would be the first significant increase to hunting and fishing license fees since 1997.

Interestingly, the governor’s proposal assumes a seven percent decline in fishing license revenues associated with the expected resistance to the fee hikes. It retains the license fee of $10 for Michigan residents and $150 for non-residents to cover small game like squirrels and rabbits, as well as migratory birds and waterfowl, but hunters wanting licenses for deer, elk, turkey, moose and other game would have to pay $450. The cost of a deer tag would increase from $15 to $20 for residents and non-residents alike, according to the DNR. Assuming the proposed hunting season for wolves goes forward in the face of challenges to the recently approved law, residents would pay $100 for a license and non-residents would pay $500, they said.

Fishing licenses would be simplified under the plan by moving away from a system based on fish species to a single price license for all species. A one-day fishing license would increase from $7 to $15, but a season-long fishing license for all species would drop from $28 to $25 for residents, while increasing from $42 to $75 for non-residents.

The budget plan, which would provide $28 million in new revenue for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR), would increase the annual amount raised from sale of hunting and fishing licenses by 38 percent—from $48.2 million to $66.6 million—with the impact aimed at non-residents of the state. A base hunting license fee of $10 for Michigan residents and $150 for non-residents would cover small game like squirrels and rabbits, as well as migratory birds and waterfowl, but hunters wanting licenses for deer, elk, turkey, moose and other game would have to pay $450. The cost of a deer tag would increase from $15 to $20 for residents and non-residents alike, according to the DNR.

Ford Kellum: Beating the drums on sprawl

Conservation battlers

Ford Kellum had a lifelong passion for protecting natural resources against all manner of assault. And the late Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) wildlife biologist remained in the western Upper Peninsula—say they need hunting and trapping to keep wolf numbers in check. He was sure that this would end their breeding in the Deward tract. He had seen too many lakes being drilled and power lines that criss- crossed the area, and lamented how the landscape was transforming into the “maze of people development.”

But some good news, too. “I’ve learned to be an instant geologist when they turned up and I didn’t know what to say, and I was sure he was right. It’s tough trying to convince a little for the generations yet unborn, but I have faith. The Michigan DNR is making an effort to see the light and we up here in the Traverse Area are winning one battle after another.”

“But you can’t do much alone,” I’m working through various organizations mostly Audubon—and we have excellent programs and well-attended board meetings. We write letters and pass resolutions like mad. Sometimes we have our Conservation pioneer when Kellum passed from the scene. But we have our Conservation battlers and part of which has been designated the Deward Management Area—and hear his distant cries.

Higher taxes on sportsmen & fuel?

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Grading Michigan lawmakers
Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder recently received an overall performance grade of “C” from the Michigan League of Conservation Voters due to the environmental impacts—or lack thereof—of his actions. And the Sierra Club has called the 2011-2012 class of state lawmakers “by far the most anti-environmental legislators in Michigan history.”

While the Republicans currently control every branch of state government and can rightly be hammered for many of the decisions they have made, Democrats and independents are not without fault when it comes to evaluating and offering solutions to today’s numerous environmental challenges.

Far too much legislation and too many bureaucratic initiatives are conceived, argued and sometimes implemented based on errant, and more careful listening to sincerely held beliefs. If we would stop pretending that anyone who disagrees with us is an ignorant fool, maybe we could actually solve some problems in a way that honors our noble tradition of self-government.

Conservation is too important for so many people to be failing the course.

Givin’ ‘em hell
In the five months we have published The North Woods Call, various readers and potential subscribers have asked the same question: "Are you going to help us 'Get Big Elk to heel?'" It’s not exactly clear who they want the hell administered to, but we like to think that we will call things as we see them and write about them if we feel such an approach is needed.

In fact, we have already done so on several occasions. Curiously, our experience thus far has shown that many of these well-intended observers do not cheer so loudly if the criticism is directed against public servants, ideas, or issues they support. That’s when they start giving us hell.

All this is to be expected in a free and open debate, but we think there should be less ridicule and mockery of our fellow citizens, and more careful listening to sincerely held beliefs. If we would stop pretending that anyone who disagrees with us is an ignorant fool, maybe we could actually solve some problems in a way that honors our noble tradition of self-government.

Scoring the work of Rio Tinto
It is interesting to note that the world’s second-largest mining company has created a scorecard that reportedly gauges how well it is meeting its goals in the eyes of community residents in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula.

Rio Tinto is going after nickel and copper in the Eagle Mine near Big Bay and Marquette and is expecting to start pulling out ore this year.

In early January, the company released results of its “community scorecard,” which features aggregate data from five initial community forums held last fall in Big Bay, Michigamme, Champion, Marquette and L’Anse, as well as subsequent selected group sessions held in Ishpeming and Marquette.

Six months later, the company plans to record additional votes with the same groups.

Perhaps not surprisingly for a company sponsored survey, reported responses indicate that Rio Tinto is meeting or exceeding expectations in all five survey areas—1) environmental protection, 2) local hires, 3) safety, 4) transparency and communication, and 5) leaving the area better than when the company arrived.

While we hope the company is indeed going about its work in a safe, economically sound and environmentally positive way, it’s easy to be suspicious of such glowing community scorecard results—especially when a request by the Marquette Mining Journal for individual results from each of the survey sessions was declined.

The newspaper wanted to publish the individual session results and make side-by-side comparisons, but the company said it would not do so, contradicting how it told the community that the data would be shared.

That’s all well and good, although we always favor more information, rather than less. In the spirit of full disclosure, The North Woods Call invites residents of these communities to share their impressions on our opinion page.

We may not learn anything new, but it could be an interesting and informative exercise.

GIVING THE GRANDSLAM

By Mike VanBuren

When Herbert Gleason Mingo was born on February 22, 1851, Millard Fillmore was president of the United States and Abraham Lincoln was still a prairie lawyer nine years from the White House.

It was the year that Yosemite Valley was discovered in California, Herman Melville published his classic novel “Moby Dick” and abolitionist Johnjlourney Thurston addressed the first Black Civil Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio.

By the time Mingo died on February 25, 1957—at the enviable age of 106—automobiles and widespread use, America was rushing headlong into the space age, and the mighty Mackinac Bridge would soon make Michigan’s Upper Peninsula more easily accessible to hunters, fishermen and tourists.

Better known as Big Elk, Mingo was a Native American man—a skilled herbalist whose extensive knowledge was based in years of hand-me-down mentoring from tribal elders, who—without expert eye for wild plants and potions that were proven cure for human ailments.

I have vague memories of Big Elk—possibly the notion that I may have seen him once as a small child, but more likely from family stories about his legendary powers as a traditional healer.

I have clearer memories of visiting his home south of Stanton with my great-grandfather Joe Mingo in the years following his death, and talking to Mrs. Arnold—Big Elk’s lifelong companion, underly and honest woman who at the time was still dispensing herbs to legions of local patients who came to her door.

On one such occasion, Mrs. Arnold was angry with the medi- cian man because, she said, he had sold out to the big drug companies. At the time, Arnold’s grave at the White Cloud Cemetery and told her there was no reason for her to do so. ‘I’ll do it another way later,’ she said.

Now they are very hardy and moss covered, a testament to the fact that they continue to be an integral part of the land and the community.

Our family became acquainted with Big Elk when my great-grandfather, Phillip Spalla—a Si- much early in the morning and used to spend the annual pollen season picking fruit on farms in the Traverse City area—learned from Herbert Mingo, as he usually made on horseback.

Big Elk knew the land on which we sit. I wish I could have talked to him about his life and what he did for the community.

Today, the beginnings of a residential housing development have appeared in the nearby woods, the medicinal quality of the plants he found there. He gathered them in the woods and fields around his house, then dried, molded and packaged them in another small building near his home. His office was usually closed on Mondays while he searched for the herbs.

Big Elk told the reporter that he ex- pected to live significantly longer, thanks to “the strength, faith and trust in him who was said to have found the problem. Spalla and other local residents who remembered him in the herbal healer and sought help with his breathing problems.

Spalla was so satisfied with the re- sults that he began referring relatives and friends to Big Elk.

According to my father, my grandfather, Herman Melville published his classic novel “Moby Dick” and abolitionist Johnjlourney Thurston addressed the first Black Civil Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio.

It’s a fine history of a mem- orable man—connected in a small way to my own family’s story. I think there’s still much to be learned from Herbert Mingo, as we journey through life and seek to heal our own bodies and souls.
In defense of Michigan’s best idea

By Drew YoungDyke

If you are an outdoors person, national parks are “America’s Best Idea,” as posited by documentary filmmaker Ken Burns, then the Natural Resources Trust Fund (NRTF) might be “Michigan’s Best Idea.”

When oil wells were proposed in the Lakeview Township of the Upper Peninsula, the NRTF was the only organization and energy interests argued, fought, and eventually compromised on a plan to use the proceeds from state oil and gas royalties to fund the acquisition, development and protection of public outdoor recreation land.

Since 2010, though, when the NRTF reached its $500 million cap after a record-breaking auction of state mineral rights, a relentless deluge of legislation has been introduced to divert, micro-manage, and subvert the purpose of the fund.

Never mind that the people of Michigan put the NRTF into the Constitution under the control of a NRTF Board in 1984 to keep it away from the Legislature after multiple legislative raids for private interests. The current Legislature sees a big pot of money which they don’t control, and they’ve used excuses ranging from local fund, divert the money to other uses, not anymore.

The state’s NRTF Board’s internal procedures illustrate a more direct way to address the PILT issue.

More disturbing is the idea that these bills are based on a bizarre conspiracy theory proposing that the United Nations is trying to take away private land rights by acquiring public land that will be off-limits to humans. As ridiculous as this sounds, NRTF Board members advocated this PILT money to fund trust fund purchases, which is allowed in the constitution and illustrated a more direct way to address the PILT issue.

Some of these bills are a little more brute about diverting NRTF money. HB 4021, sponsored by Rep. Dave Agema (R-Grandville) would divert 20 percent of gas royalties to an aeronautics fund and 60 percent to the transportation fund; HB 5981 would steal 50 percent for outdoor recreation opportunities for future projects.

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In the “subvert the purpose” of the trust fund category are bills to limit public outdoor recreation land in Michigan. Without the ability to purchase additional land, the NRTF would lose the future purpose, though development grants to local communities would still be allowed. These proposals illustrate a more direct way to address the PILT issue.

Sen. Casperson, who owns a logging business, also introduced bills SB 822 and SJR Q to amend the Michigan Constitution to use NRTF dollars to build logging roads and to fund dredging operations.

Finally, there are bills that would exert legislative control over the sale of NRTF projects. These bills started with Rep. McBroom’s proposed amendment to HB 3634, to remove four regional acquisition projects that provide money for the NRTF to acquire private land holdings in existing tracts of state land that become available for purchase throughout the year. The House's version of the amendment was voted down, but the Senate introduced and voted to fund all four projects, so the bill is still alive. A conference committee could reconcile the two versions of the bill, the funding for the northern Lower Peninsula and Upper Peninsula eco-region acquisitions was stripped from the bill.

Since then, Rep. McBroom introduced HB 5944 to prohibit any future eco-region project recommendations and Sen. Darwin Belowher introduced SB 1238 that would have packed the NRTF Board with two extra Legislature-approved members, imposed terms on the board, prohibited any acquisition projects that were solicited by the DNR, a local township or a county, and required board members to buy public land.

A substitute version of the bill keeps the terms limit and the motorized prioritization, even though it would have left towns and counties three times as many motorized non- motorized pathways in the trail system. A provision in the substitute bill prohibits purchases in which the sale was involuntary, as if this was necessary, since the NRTF Board’s internal procedures already forbid involuntary acquisitions.

These legislative intrusions into the process is that the province of a constitutionally mandated ex- ecutive agency board are contrary to the intent of the Michigan Constitution.

Article IV, Section 35 of the Michigan Constitution specifies that Natural Resources Trust Fund projects shall be recommended by the Trust Fund Board. The Michigan Supreme Court has held that boards are granted power to carry out the duties assigned to them, and to this end the Trust Fund Board has developed policies, procedures and standards with the Michigan Land Office and their constitutional mandate.

The NRTF Board has set specific criteria for evaluated projects proposed for funding. Their priorities for 2012 include:

**Requiem for a self-made man**

The layer-cake loveliness of new snow always looks best when left unmarked by track or trail. But who could resist the six fresh inches on the walking paths behind the barn? The dog tore past, a black furry streak of youthful energy. By the bay, the barn’s furry tail swishing with quiet enthusiasm.

“Dad,” you remember when I called your barber shop from Fort Benning after I earned my Army paratrooper wings? There was no one else in the world that I wanted to tell first. “Dad, you remember the time we camped at Mud Lake and Warren waded into the ocean to catch whiting with a cane pole? And that day you showed me the white sand with a fairy rod how to fish?”

“Dad, you remember how in Florida, we’d clip blue crabs and jumbo shrimps off the pier by the Melbourne library? One night I lost that long-handled net with two crabs still in it and you didn’t even catch me out. At least, not much.”

“Dad, you remember how I’d and Jeff and I'd sand flea for bait while you waded into the ocean to catch whiting with a cane pole? And that day you showed me the wind with a fairy rod how to fish?”

“Dad, you remember when I lost that steelhead in the Muskegon River below the Hardy Dam? That night, we camped in a tent and a blizzard blew it half down. That was the same storm that sank the Ed- mund Fitzgerald.”

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I ran again through the stories in my head as I walked the trail. Even then, alongside me, was life and death. The dog tore past, a black furry streak of youthful energy. By the barn, the grey tufts of rabbit fur and wing swipes on the snow marked where a red-tailed hawk had swooped in for the kill.

Then, from across the field, love personified.

“Tom-m-m-m,” my favorite feminine voice called, “dinner’s ready!”

Inside the kitchen, a steaming dish of Nancy’s spinach tortelli, juicy with home-canned tomatoes, awaited. Finished. Ready to eat—now, Dammit, where’s the girls?”

“Get down here, or we’ll start without you!” I hollered up the stairs.

“And if you’re waiting on me, you’re backing up.”


A note to letter writers

All letters must be signed. Please include your name and mailing address (e-mail address, too, if you don’t mind).

We no longer accept 2-column advertise. If you must have them to verify that letters are authentic. No unsigned letters will be used. It’s OK for your signature to be electronic.
Outdoor Rhythms

By Doug Freeman

Refuge from the storm

Every Michigan winter brings with it some serious weather, no matter where you live. Here in the northwest corner of Muskegon county, we regularly deal with 30-mile-an-hour winds, sleet, driving snow, and temperatures dipping toward zero. Shelter becomes an absolute necessity for animals and people alike. Deer and birds tend to hunker down in the thickest cover they can find. Woodchucks, skunks, possums, and other small mammals make their dens underground, in hollow trees, or in hidden spots inside buildings where there’s access and minimal human activity. Livestock move into their barns and sheds, and can’t be easily coaxed out until conditions moderate.

Our barn is a pretty good place to get out of those fierce Lake Michigan winds. Long and low, cobbled together, it’s not perfect. Worse yet, I’m no carpenter. That being said, I’ve managed to fill in most of the open wall spaces with used windows, planking, and panels, a portion of which can be removed again come spring.

Snow blows in through the numerous small holes and cracks, but the interior feels surprisingly comfortable, especially when you’ve just slammed the door on a roaring blizzard.

The building has electricity for lights and power tools, along with nearly arranged hay bales, feed drums, bags of cedar shavings and a heated water basin used mostly by our crew of barn cats. If that’s not enough, my lovely wife and I haul buckets of warm water from the house every twelve hours or so, a walk of about eighty yards. Not too bad, except to drink a lot.

When the drifts are waist-deep, a short-handled aluminum shovel cuts a nice path. Great exercise, but tiring if you have to clear the same route more than twice a day.

Then there’s the after-storm shoveling. Clearing snow away from doors and opening up the barnyard is a requirement. Goats are fussies animals, I’ve learned, and don’t like to fight their way through the white stuff. Horses and ponies are much more willing to venture out to the winter wonderland, and will push along even when the snow is up to their forelegs—provided there’s some place they want to go.

Whatever foodies are left over from outdoor feedings don’t go to waste. Birds of many species flock in to grab the loose oats, corn, and seed. At night, rabbits and deer slip silently into the yard to nibble on nourishing snacks of alfalfa and grain, while enjoying a break from the wind on the barn’s lee side. On nights that aren’t so cold, possums come out to share cat food, waiting patiently until the felines have eaten their fill. Two of those unflappable marsupials are currently residing in our barn—the larger one of which projects will or will not receive funding. The citizens of Michigan put the trust fund into the Constitution to keep it away from the Legislature after it was diverted for other uses. Legislators have no business micro-managing the selection process, diverting funds, or subverting the purpose of the trust fund. People who care about conservation of public lands and outdoor recreation have to speak up, though, or our silence will be assumed to be acquiescence.

Dwight Freeman is a writer and amateur naturalist living near the Lake Michigan shoreline north of Montague, Michigan.

Anglers review fisheries plan

The Grayling-based Anglers of the Au Sable organization has reviewed the Michigan Department of Natural Resources’ (DNR) draft Fisheries Division Strategic Plan and members are “generally pleased with the overall direction” of the document. The majority of objectives in the plan are in agreement with those of the Anglers, the group said in comments submitted to DNR Fisheries Division Chief Jim Dexter. Both the group’s Au Sable Resource Agency Committee and its Habitat Restoration and Environment Committee said they “hear the call for partnership” and offered volunteers to help execute the plan. They asked for more specifics around the various goals, however, and concurred that additional revenue will be needed to bring the plan to fruition. More dialogue is needed around resource investment strategies, they said, and the Anglers would like to remain part of those discussions.

The comment period for the plan—which may still be available on the DNR website—ended Feb. 10. More than 10,000 people provided input into the plan—which will guide future management activities—via online surveys and phone interviews, the DNR said.

Viewpoint: Defending Michigan’s best idea

(Continued from Page 5) trails and greenways, wildlife and ecological corridors and winter deeryards, and projects in urban areas. When the Legislature for bids eco-region projects and requires the board to prioritize motorized use projects, it violates the intent of the Constitution to have the NRTF Board decide which projects will or will not receive funding. The citizens of Michigan put the trust fund into the Constitution to keep it away from the Legislature after it was diverted for other uses. Legislators have no business micro-managing the selection process, diverting funds, or subverting the purpose of the trust fund. People who care about conservation of public lands and outdoor recreation have to speak up, though, or our silence will be assumed to be acquiescence.

Henry David Thoreau wrote, “Let every man make known what kind of government would command his respect, and that will be one step toward obtaining it.” We do have to speak up, though. Michigan’s best idea can’t go down without a fight.

Drew Younger is a blogger and grassroots manager at the Michigan United Conservation Clubs.

Waitin’ for Summer

This icy beach on the south side of Whitefish Bay patiently awaits the inevitable spring thaw and return of the summer tourists. On this particular day in mid-January, the water was frozen several yards from shore, although it was still open further out in the bay. Temperatures hovered near zero degrees Fahrenheit that morning, but the week before had seen unseasonably warm temperatures across the state.

Dredging is wrong use of money

Another proposed raid on the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (NRTF) has sparked outcries from conservationists who say the fund should only be used for special activities that preserve the beauty of Michigan for future generations.

Some politicians now want to dip into the fund to pay for harbored dredging at various locations. But that is an inappropriate use of the money, opponents say.

“Despite deep support for this constitutionally enshrined fund, legislators have consistently looked to it as a short-term solution to budget challenges in recent years,” said the Michigan League of Conservation Voters (MLCV).

“Though none of these raids gained much traction last season—in no small part because we and fellow conservation groups drew a big, thick line in the sand—it took only three weeks for a legislator to introduce just such a bill this term.”

In late January, Michigan Rep. Bob Genetski (R-Saugatuck) introduced House Bill 4106, which would allow NRTF money to be used for dredging Great Lakes Harbors.

Without immediate dredging, Michigan stands to lose significant tourism dollars as many small- and medium-sized harbors may be unable to open this summer due to record-low Great Lakes water levels. The levels are reportedly down due to recent widespread droughts and warm temperatures that boost evaporation rates. But raiding the NRTF is not the answer, according to the MLCV.

“Instead, we support a solution closer to the more comprehensive approach that Governor Snyder has proposed,” the organization said. “We are echoing the governor’s call for a one-time use of general fund dollars in this year’s budget, paired with quicker permitting for dredging.

“We can work together to find a creative solution to this problem, but raiding the NRTF is not on the table.”

(For more thoughts about the NRTF, see Drew Younger/Dyke’s related commentary on Page 5 of this issue).

A Winter’s Catch

A young angler shows off a bluegill while ice fishing recently in Michigan. Winter can be a great time to enjoy the outdoors, as many of the state’s 11,000 lakes offer cold-weather fun and world-class fishing.
DISTRICT 1
CO Grant Emeret responded to the scene of a snowmobile that sank in Lake Gogebic. A 20-foot wide press core opened up and one snowmobile was lost in 12 feet of water. The snowmobile was raised the next day.

CO Dave Painter is assisting the local Wisconsin wardens with an investigation involving a deer poaching ring along the Wisconsin border. Multiple deer and suspects have been uncovered and the investigation is ongoing.

DISTRICT 2
CO Kyle Publiski was at a local bar when he observed a group of anglers. He asked if they had noticed that the deer was shot on the 27th. Further investigation revealed that the tag was purchased after legal hours on the same day that it was shot. The CO began an investigation into the suspicious deaths and was able to get a full confession from the suspect. A 20-foot long snowmobile was hunting without a license and only buys a kill tag if a deer is harvested. The suspect and was able to get the animal. The car was found in the weeds and arrest warrants have been sought and approved. Resurrection for the deer is being sought in the case.

CO Kyle Publiski responded to a complaint of illegal traps being set on private property. Upon arrival, he found an illegal Comiber 330 trap and illegal set nets. After several days, a suspect was identified and ticket was issued for the illegal traps.

CO Robert Crisp checked an ice lake where there were several anglers using tip-ups as well as jiggling rods. At one point, a suspect who was fishing a Crisp watched from shore and quickly reeled up his line and dropped the rod on the ice. CO Crisp then moved his posture and the suspect immediately returned to where the anglers’ vehicles were parked. He watched and listened from near by. The suspect then walked down the pile to a friend that he was surprised the CO did not see him with his fishing line. Just before the group was about to leave the parking area, CO Crisp contacted the suspect and was able to get the angler to bring up the boat and try to hide his fishing line. The reason for that was not purchased a fishing license. A ticket was issued.

DISTRICT 3
An investigation into an unlicensed taxidermist led CO Mark DePew and five other District 3 officers to serve a search warrant on the man’s residence. Officers found evidence of unlicensed taxidermy business along with other illegally harvested animals, which are following up.

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NOTE TO READERS:
These are brief excerpts from the CO’s monthly field reports. To contact the officers, or for any questions, please see the activities in favor of what we think are the most unusual and interesting.

If you want a more complete log than we are able to provide, you can find an archive of them under the Law Enforcement tab on the Michigan Department of Natural Resources website.

CO Kelly Ross received a complaint from a hunter that he witnessed a deer being harvested. The hunter reported that he witnessed a deer with a 12-point back and had his wife buy a tag so he could continue hunting.

CO Jon Skiba and Bill Webster received a complaint of a deer that had gotten stuck in the slush in Lake Huron. The COs put on their waders and went into the frigid waist-deep water. They were able to circle around the deer to the front and move it in the right direction, and ultimately had to drag the deer onto the shore.

CO Andrea Erratt and Andrea Albert patrolled the Jordan Valley snowmobile trails and encountered several snowmobilers who failed to purchase trail permits. Two of the rentals did not have a trail permit and the rental agency/owner was ticketed for the violation.

CO Jon Skiba took down names and addresses of ice shanties on Grand Lake during the month of February last week, which proved to be very beneficial, as two shanties went through the ice later in the week. The owners have been contacted and given some time to get the shanties out.

DISTRICT 4
CO Holly Pennoni responded to a complaint of subjects catching and keeping undersized northern pike on a Wexford County inland lake. CO Pennoni contacted the suspects and located two undersized pike. Enforcement action was taken.

CO Angela Greenway was patrolling in rural Lake County when she spotted a fisherman who had stopped in the roadway. Upon contacting the occupants, she learned that they were coyote hunting with hounds. Further investigation revealed that the two occupants possessed two partially uncased firearms in the vehicle, one of which was loaded. Tickets were issued for the safety violations.

DISTRICT 5
CO Mike Hearns was patrolling state land and found a snare set and fresh blood in the snare being checked. Officer Hearns walked the area and located four furs torn out by one having a tag. CO Hearns followed up with the name on the tag and the subject admitted to setting the traps and verified. Enforcement action was taken.

Area 5-1 conducted patrols during the first weekend of Tip-Ups. During this time, numerous legal violations were found for unregistered snowmobiles, no trail permits, no helmets, careless operating of a snowmobile with too many lines. Enforcement action was taken.

CO John McCallough finished investigating a trap not checking his traps on a daily basis. The investigation started with a complaint of a raccoon that had been in a trap for three days and concluded with a confession from the suspect and a ticket being issued.

DISTRICT 6
CO Quinn Gowanlock had a bench trial with a defendant who shot an eight-point buck from a vehicle last November while using an archery bow and arrow. The other game laws were also violated. When the defendant arrived at the courthouse, he had a change of heart and admitted to the poaching violation. The prosecutor dropped seven additional charges and let the defendant plea guilty to a possession of an illegal deer. During the sentencing the judge gave him 10 days in jail and a $500 fine. The subject then stated he was planning on moving out of state the next day, and the judge then suspended his jail sentence and gave him 45 days to leave the state of Michigan and to show proof of moving. If he failed to prove he would show proof he was doing the time.

Sgt. Ron Kimmerly was checking wallayge anglers as they pulling their boats off the ice ledge on the Saginaw River. The sergeant searched one of the anglers and asked if he caught any fish. The angler said no but did have a license. As the sergeant advised he was going to search the boat, the angler then stated he caught one, and reached into the live well on his boat and stated he had an undersized wallage. The angler said when he measured it he thought it was 15 inches. The sergeant then asked if there was any more walleye in the boat. The angler again said no. The sergeant again said he was going to check the boat. The angler again reached into the live well and said, “Well, there is one more walleye, but it’s the same size as the other one.” The sergeant then searched the boat and no additional walleye were found. When asked for his fishing license, the angler couldn’t find it, but swore that he bought one. After checking the boat, the sergeant found that he had not purchased a fishing license in 2012. Tickets were issued.

DISTRICT 7
CO Jeff Robinette obtained a four-count warrant for a subject who was trespassing a lawful hunter during the firewood season. At one point during the investigation of the complaint, CO Robinette accompanied the hunter to his stand and observed the suspect trespass on the property and harass the hunter. Three counts of criminal trespass were authorized by the prosecutor.

CO Mike McGee was on patrol when he noticed a large cloud of black smoke in the distance. CO McGee followed the smoke to three men who were burning a fiberglass boat. CO McGee issued the suspect who was burning the boat a ticket for the illegal burning.

CO Mike Mihra contacted two juveniles who were trapping with untagged traps. The CO instructed them on how to properly tag their traps, reviewed other laws and met with their grand mother to advise her of the rules as well. A positive learning experience was had by all.

DISTRICT 8
CO Derek Miller checked two subjects fishing in a shanty. He announced his presence and approached the subjects to open the shack and wanted to talk through the portable shanty. CO McGee convinced them to open the shack and not to burn the contents of the shanty. The case was referred to the service bureau. Only one subject was able to produce a fishing license. During the contact CO Miller was unable to locate a marina but the subjects admitted to smoking a small amount earlier. One subject was issued a ticket for a fishing violation. The other subject had a statewide warrant for his possession of a deer with a no possibility in possession of stolen property. That subject was transported to the county jail.

CO Kyle Bader received four different Report All poaching (RAP) complaints for the same small cave on Rose Lake of people taking over-limit and double tripping (returning to catch another limit). CO Bader checked the area several times and found no other anglers who all had near his limit of panfish. CO Bader set up on a ridge across the lake with his spotting scope and watched and took notes on all 10 anglers that showed up and when they left. Less than an hour after they left, a pair of anglers came back to the same holes they drilled earlier. CO Bader watched them catch fish for a bit, then drove to their residences. One angler had 48 bluegill and the other had 56. They said they thought the 25 limit was too per tag and that they took their fish off the ice and came back. Enforcement action was taken. As he was going out to check them on the ice, multiple respondents pointed out to him and said the two are there twice each day.

CO Todd Thor and an Ingham County animal control officer responded to a RAP report of a deer that had been hanging in a yard since the middle of November. When they arrived at the residence, the 10-point buck was debris looking on a ground under a tree beside a house. The man living at the residence, as well as his son, were questioned. They admitted to having shot the deer on November and left it alone and did not ever put a tag on it. The deer was gutted, but the meat was wasted. Enforcement action was taken.

DISTRICT 9
CO Ben Shively, Kris Kiel, and Mike Drexler conducted an inspection on a taxidermy shop in Oscoda County. The shop is located to an allegedly illegally taken bear, a subject taking an over-limit of antlered deer, an otter that had been taken during the closed season, and a subject that hides with no scientific collection permits, and two cases of using/lending kill tag of another.

CO Mike McGee issued the subject who service (USFWS) was contacted and responded to the taxidermy shop after the COs located a full bald eagle, three bald eagle heads and parts, a great horned owl, a red tail hawk, and a sandhill crane. The USFWS agents were able to take the taxidermy specimens that were not tagged. Tickets were issued to the taxi- dermist and he gave up to keep accurate records, failing to tag specimens with specimen ID tags, and possession of a road-killed fawn. Evidence was seized by the COs and USFWS agents.

The COs have been conducting interviews and viewing confessions, and warrants will be sought on the illegally taken game. The USFWS agents will be investigat- ing the cases.

CO Ben Shively contacted a man and woman who had just set up six tips near an access site in Portage County. When asked for their fishing licenses the woman stated that she was not fishing and the man stated that his license must be in his other wallet. CO Shively asked if all of the tips up had his name and address on them. He stated that three did and the others did not because he just bought them. A check of the li- cense system showed that the man did not have a fishing license. For more information, see the Newshound Productions page at mynorthwoodscall.com.
“Mitten Mixers” offer outdoor social networking

You may enjoy huddling around a bright computer screen, but colder temperatures and snowy days are no reason to stay indoors this winter. Especially if you’re looking for social networking opportunities, new relationships and friendships can be found outside—along with improved physical health, mental well-being and a stronger kinship with the natural world.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has tried to facilitate such interactions with a series of Valentine “Mitten Mixers” at state parks and recreation areas. The events—scheduled for Feb. 14-17 at various locations—have been geared to help singles make connections with like-minded individuals.

“Whether you want to meet new people, or simply enjoy a different kind of ‘date night,’ our Mitten Mixer lineup has something for just about everyone,” said Maia Stephens, recreation programmer in the DNR’s Parks and Recreation Division.

From snowshoeing at Cadillac’s Mitchell State Park to stargazing at Emmet County’s Wilderness State Park to ice-skating at Muskegon State Park, several fun and healthy activities are being offered.

Even if you’ve missed these opportunities, the DNR plans a number of family and couple-friendly events each winter, Stephens said.

“For just eleven dollars, you can get the Michigan Recreation Passport, which gives you access to every state park and recreation area in Michigan,” she said. “With the passport, your outdoor playground just got a whole lot bigger.”

Stephens said love of the great outdoors can bring people together and provide common ground for them to establish and nurture relationships—family or otherwise.

Try something different, meet new people and surprise yourself,” she said. “It’s time to learn or rediscover just how much fun a Michigan winter can be.”

For more details about Mitten Mixers on Valentine’s weekend and beyond—as well as other outdoor recreation programs—visit www.michigan.gov/state parks.

—Michigan Department of Natural Resources