



**“The newspaper for people
who love the north”**



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Michigan's Conservation Sentinel Since 1953



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Hello Spring 2013**

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www.mynorthwoodscall.com

Help requested from readers

Call history book planned

A couple of readers have suggested during the past six months that “somebody needs to write a biography of Glen Sheppard.”

And they said that current *North Woods Call* editor Mike VanBuren might be the logical one to do it.

“Shep,” as Sheppard was widely known, published *The Call* for 42 years before his death in early 2011. He was at times an irascible character who was tenacious in his defense of Michigan’s natural resources.

“I agree that some kind of historical perspective on the newspaper would be in order,” VanBuren said, “and I’ve long been interested in doing something with that history. In fact, I tried to talk Shep into a book or video documentary over a period of several years when he was still alive.”

Shep, however, claimed that he didn’t like to shine the light too brightly on himself and repeatedly declined the offers, according to VanBuren.

“I’m giving some serious thought to this idea again,” VanBuren said, but rather than focus exclusively on Glen Sheppard I’d like to put together a more comprehensive history of the publication.”

Shep, of course, would be a major part of that story, he said.

VanBuren, the newspaper’s owner and publisher for the past six months, has already begun collecting background information on Sheppard and Marguerite Gahagan, *The Call*’s founder and editor for the first 16 years. He also is researching editorial content from past issues, and hopes to create an in-depth “biography and reader” that tells the story of the publication’s 60-year history.”

But he needs help. Longtime readers of *The Call* and those who knew Gahagan and Shep personally are being asked to share information and anecdotes about these legendary individuals and the vital role their efforts played in Michigan conservation history.

“It will take some time to gather this information,” VanBuren said, “but there’s no time like the present to get started.”

VanBuren said he would like to hear from “people with stories to tell” over the next few months.

“E-mail messages, or written correspondence would be most helpful at this stage,” he said, “although I am willing to do some personal interviews as well.”

Photographs, documents and other items to illustrate this history are also being sought.

Watch for additional information during the coming months.

State Outdoor Recreation Plan Approved

The National Park Service has approved Michigan’s new Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, opening the door for federal funding to acquire and develop outdoor recreation resources.

State officials and their local outdoor recreation partners use the plan to guide decisions on outdoor recreation management and policy. The updated version—developed by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) with public input—aims to leverage the state’s diverse and abundant natural resources “to meet relaxation and health needs, as well as the economic development needs of Michigan and local communities,” according to the DNR.

“The plan provides strategic direction about how to make the most of our state’s outdoor recreation opportunities,” said DNR Director Keith Creagh.

“The information helps us understand trends, needs and emerging issues that affect outdoor recreation.”

To be eligible for support from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, states must prepare and gain approval of a comprehensive outdoor recreation plan, which must be updated every five years.

The 2013-2017 plan focuses on improving collaboration between outdoor recreation providers; ensuring the maintenance and improvement of outdoor recreation facilities; the improvement of access to recreation opportunities; the integration of outdoor recreation with economic development plans; the marketing of outdoor recreation opportunities; and the protection of both natural and cultural resources.

The final plan can be viewed at www.michigan.gov/dnr-grants.

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Gitchee Gumee

The National Wildlife Federation (NWF) says big changes are ahead for fish and land-based wildlife, because the world’s largest freshwater lake it is heating up rapidly. High temperature records for Lake Superior were shattered last year, NWF officials say, and that is bad news for native trout, which thrive in cold water. With the warming water, they said, sea lamprey are starting to live longer and get bigger, which impacts fish. In addition, some land-based wildlife, such as moose, are poorly suited to a warmer world. They don’t migrate easily and can’t escape warmer temperatures, or the diseases they are getting due to a higher tick population.

Battle goes to House; DNR remains “neutral”

Senate embraces “anti-biodiversity” bill

By now, you may have heard that the Republican-controlled Michigan Senate on March 5 passed what has been called “the anti-biological diversity bill” along party lines.

The legislation was moved forward despite outcries from several concerned citizens, including conservationists, members of environmental organizations and experts who say the legislation ignores good science and the need for sustainability.

It is now up to the Michigan House of Representatives to halt this push to redefine conservation in the state, and limit the ability of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to protect natural resources and wildlife.

Opponents of the legislation have already begun to reach out to members of the House Natural Resources Committee—where the bill currently resides—and are encouraging citizens to contact their state representatives and the governor to voice their concerns.

If passed by the House and signed into law, the legislation would reportedly prevent the DNR from acting under the Endangered Species Act and a variety of other laws to promote and restore biodiversity on public lands.

One northern Michigan conservation organization, Anglers of the AuSable, has called this “a brazen attempt to turn back the clock to a century of unfettered industry use” of state forests.

Jack Schmitt, political director at the Michigan League of Conservation Voters, said the legislation jeopardizes nearly \$22 million in federal funding for forest management and puts Michigan’s sustainable forestry certificates on 3.9 million acres at risk.

“It makes it harder to ensure our forests, native plants and wildlife will be here for future generations,” Schmitt wrote in his “Political Week In Review” blog.

According to the Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC), biodiversity is needed for sound natural resources management. It provides for healthy forests and habitat, and creates unique ecosystems that make Michigan the natural resources envy of the nation, MUCC officials said.

Supporters of the legislation, meanwhile, say that the purpose is not to write biodiversity out of state law, but simply prevent the implementation of the DNR’s Biodiversity Stewardship Area program, which they claim severely

limits, or precludes human activity on the land.

“The sky is not falling,” said Sen. Tom Casperson (R-Escanaba)—sponsor of the bill—in a recent opinion piece appearing in the *Escanaba Daily Press*. “(The legislation) ensures that balance is remaining between the conservation of biodiversity and the wise use of the natural resources, by preventing bureaucrats from precluding human activity on hundreds of thousands of acres of public and private land.”

A DNR spokesman, meanwhile, said the agency remained “neutral” on the matter.

“Biodiversity is an important part of ecosystem management,” acknowledged Ed Golder, the DNR’s public information officer, but “we don’t believe the bill as it currently stands prohibits managing state lands for biodiversity. Instead, it prohibits designating particular areas as biodiversity preserves through administrative rule or order.”

“We currently believe we can continue to accomplish the state’s goals within the strictures of this legislation,” Golder said. “We’ll be watching the bill closely as it moves through the legislative process.”



North Woods Notes

FISHING REGULATIONS: Public meetings are scheduled across Michigan this spring to discuss new or proposed local and statewide fishing regulations. Local fisheries management and regulation proposals will be covered, as well as modifications to northern pike and muskellunge regulations that were adopted for the 2013 fishing season and take effect April 1. For more information about the meeting times and locations, visit www.michigan.gov/fishing.

DAM REMOVAL ACTIVITY: In addition to Brown Bridge Dam on the Boardman River (see Page 3), a number of other northern Michigan dams have been removed during the past several years in an effort to restore rivers and tributaries to their natural flow. Among them—in the Manistee River Watershed—were the Wheeler Creek Dam and the Manton Millpond Dam in Wexford County, as well as a project at the old Flowing Well Trout Farm on the North Branch of the Manistee River.

GREAT LAKES COMMISSION PRIORITIES: The Great Lakes Commission has announced its 2013 federal legislative priorities. They include sustaining progress under the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, passing comprehensive legislation to strengthen Great Lakes conservation efforts, strengthening protections against Asian carp and other aquatic invasive species, addressing the low-water crisis facing commercial navigation and recreational harbors, helping communities upgrade aging water infrastructures and reauthorizing the Farm Bill with strong conservation provisions.

WOLF MANAGEMENT MEETINGS: Two more informational meetings about wolf management and a possible future wolf hunting season will be held during late March. One will be March 19 at the Wisconsin Street Hall, 610 S. Wisconsin in Gaylord and the other will be March 21 at the Lansing Center, Room 201, 333 E. Michigan Avenue in Lansing. Attendees will be asked to participate in a survey about wolf hunting as a management tool in Michigan and the public input will help the DNR’s Wildlife Division develop its recommendation to the Natural Resources Commission, which is expected to be made no later than June. Additional meetings on this topic may also be scheduled.

SEA LAMPREY DECODING: A team of Michigan State University scientists has mapped an assembly of the sea lamprey genome—the first time the entire sequence has been decoded. The data—presented in the current issue of *Nature Genetics*—is compelling because the sea lamprey is one of the few ancient species that has survived into the modern era. Sea lampreys are a troublesome invasive species that feed by attaching themselves to other fish, such as salmon and trout. Understanding them better and how they have survived over the centuries is vital to control efforts. Just one sea lamprey can kill more than 40 pounds of fish. The U.S. and Canada spend \$10 million to \$15 million annually to control them in the Great Lakes.

(Continued on Page 2)



North Woods Notes

(Continued from Page 1)

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION: The next Michigan Natural Resources Commission meeting will be held April 11 at Saginaw Field & Stream Conservation Club, 1296 North Gleaner Road, Saginaw. The commission also will meet April 11, June 13, July 11, September 12, November 7 and December 12 at the Michigan State University Diagnostic Center, 4125 Beaumont Road, Lansing. The May 9 meeting will be at the Ralph A. MacMullan Conference Center, 104 Conservation Drive, Roscommon. On August 8, the commission will be at Annis Water Resources Institute in the Lake Michigan Center, 740 West Shoreline Drive, Muskegon, and on October 10 commissioners will convene at a location yet to be determined in Iron Mountain. For more information about starting times and agendas, visit the Michigan Department of Natural Resources website at michigan.gov/dnr.

PIGEON & STURGEON RIVERS: Gaylord-based Huron Pines has received funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and other local partners to advance conservation efforts in the Pigeon and Sturgeon river watersheds. Several on-the-ground projects are planned and a partnership network is being developed for long-term watershed protection. The two rivers were heavily logged in the latter part of the 19th Century, severely scarring the land. Healing has occurred over time with the help of natural resource management, and the rivers again boast of thriving cold-water fisheries and beautiful rolling landscapes that need to be protected for future generations.

STREAM MONITORING: The Michigan Clean Water Corps, a network of volunteer monitoring programs in Michigan, has announced \$50,000 in grants available for volunteer stream monitoring in the state. Local units of government and nonprofit organizations are eligible to receive funding. Grant applications are due by 5 p.m. April 1. For information, visit www.micorps.net. Questions about the grant application process should be directed to Dr. Paul Steen at the Huron River Watershed Council, (734) 769-5123.

CONSERVATION EDUCATOR HONORED: Maureen Stine, a conservation educator for the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) in Michigan, has been named one of five Outstanding Educators by Project Learning Tree, the national environmental education program of the American Forest Foundation. Stine works at the NRCS Onaway field office.

HUNTER EDUCATION: Michigan residents who need to complete a hunter education course should enroll this spring. Although classes are held year-round, they are much more plentiful in April, May, August and September, according to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. For information about traditional classroom, home study and online classes, visit www.michigan.gov/huntereducation.

DIVERSITY SOUGHT IN SE MICHIGAN: The DNR is seeking to expand the pool of hunter education instructors in southeast Michigan, with a focus on recruiting more women and people of color. If you're interested in this opportunity, contact Peggy Ruby at rubby@michigan.gov, or call her at (586) 405-5359.

GREAT LAKES WATER LEVELS: A new cross-border organization is urging federal, state and provincial government authorities to act immediately to solve the crisis of low water levels in Lakes Michigan and Huron, including the Georgian Bay. Restore Our Water International Inc. is demanding that governments address the economic and ecological impacts of record-breaking low-water levels, which the organization says is clearly caused by human activity. Restore Our Water is an alliance of Canadian and American organizations concerned about this problem, said Roger Gauthier, a retired U.S. Army Corps of Engineers hydrologist and chairman of the group.

MICHIGAN FISHING GUIDES: Don't forget to pick up your copy of the 2013 Michigan Fishing Guide, now available at any location where fishing licenses are sold. It includes rules and regulations effective from April 1, 2013 through March 31, 2014. This year's edition appears in a smaller physical size on higher-quality paper and an easier-to-read font size.

PURE MICHIGAN HUNT: Hunters may now apply for the 2014 Pure Michigan Hunt drawing. Applications can be purchased in unlimited quantities for \$4 each wherever licenses are sold, or online at www.mdnr-eligence.com. Prizes vary somewhat from year-to-year, but the hunting licenses the winners receive stay the same. Past winners have taken home rifles, shotguns, crossbows, pop-up blinds, full camouflage clothing packages, guided hunts and much more.

BE A LIGHTKEEPER: Ever wonder what it would be like to be a Great Lakes lightkeeper? You can find out via a program that allows volunteers to live in the restored keepers house at Tawas Point on Lake Huron for periods of one or two weeks. Openings began in early March and runs into early December. Applicants must be at least 18 years old, agree to lead lighthouse tours and perform other light maintenance duties during their stay. Oh, and there's a \$225 per person fee each week.

O.B Eustis Award goes to Thomas Buhr of Luzerne

Dr. Thomas Buhr of Luzerne, a member of the Anglers of the AuSable Board of Directors, recently received the O.B. Eustis Award for his conservation work.

The award—one of two presented during February at the Huron Pines annual meeting in Gaylord—is given to individuals, organizations, or businesses that display great enthusiasm for protecting Michigan's natural resources. The second award went to Otsego County's Livingston Township.

Buhr, who also serves as a member of the Michigan Coldwater Resources Steering Committee and the Lake Huron Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee, is known as a no-nonsense and hands-on conservationist who has been an environmental advocate for years.

He has led many volunteer efforts to restore native habitat and repair riverbanks, reflecting his passion for the AuSable River watershed. In addition, Buhr is editor of the Angler's award-winning *Riverwatch* publication.

Livingston Township was honored for helping protect fish in the Sturgeon River during a road repaving project. The township replaced the crossing of Poquette Road over the river and re-engineered the bridge to include an opening that does not restrict the passage of migrating fish.

It is this kind of community cooperation that gets important conservation projects done and positively impacts many river miles both upstream and downstream, according to Huron Pines officials.

The late O.B. Eustis of Alpena was an exemplary leader in balancing economic development with natural resource conservation. An annual grant of \$1,500 from the Community Foundation of Northeast Michigan supports local conservation projects designated by the award winners.

Ribbet, ribbet: Spring frogs and toads

With springtime just around the corner, we'll soon be hearing the sounds of Michigan's 13 distinctive species of frogs and toads.

Each species can be identified by its characteristic call—not only for the purpose of attracting mates, but to warn other males of their presence and not to enter their territory.

Collectively, frogs and toads are a group of amphibians called anurans, which means “without a tail.” Frogs have smoother skin, longer legs and spend more time in the water than toads. Toads generally take short hops, while frogs may leap several feet in a single jump.

Amphibians are excellent indicators of environmental problems, according to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR), because of their direct contact with gases and liquids in the air, water, mud and leaf litter in which they spend their lives.

A worldwide decline of amphibians—including frogs and toads—has been documented since the 1970s. Although scientists have not discovered a positive reason for the decline, many theories have been offered. Habitat degradation, commercial harvest of food, the pet trade and pollution could all be factors contributing to this phenomenon.

Both frogs and toads require water for at least part of their life cycle. From late winter to early summer (depending on the species), male frogs and toads begin calling for mates from their wetland breeding sites.

In the spring of 1996, the DNR launched a frog and toad monitoring program—under way soon—to help track population numbers.

—Michigan DNR

Our 60th Year: Looking Back to March 24, 1954

—Excerpts from *The North Woods Call*—

The Time Is Now

By Marguerite Gahagan

The rustle of spring in the north woods should not be missed.

To be sure, Mother Goose has not completely used up her feathers for the season and one can expect flurries of snow in the north country for a full month. But a bright sun's warming rays are melting snow banks and bringing out large bare spots of earth covered with greening partridge berry, wintergreen and the fragrant trailing arbutus.

Trout season is coming up and fishermen are awaiting word that the smelt have started running.

Wise cabin owners are drifting up in increasing numbers to check on the toll winter took on roofs, caves, windows and chimneys—not to mention the work frequently chalked up by visiting small woods creatures. Chipmunks, mice and flying squirrels have been known to provide distant cabin owners with distinctive welcomes.

The knowing north country enthusiast can almost always find a good excuse to head for the woods and get needed cabin clean-up, fix-up, paint-up work out of the way early enough so that—when the sports do open—precious weekend time won't have to be spent working at repairs.

The early visitor comes in time to seek out the first rustles of spring—maple sugar time in the sugar bush, the first gathering of noisy crows, the fascinating pleasures of spring bird watching, and checking on the swelling buds of pussy willows and Juneberry bushes.

In the soft melting snow, the awakening woods creatures leave their marks as proof that the time for sleep is over and the time for doing is upon us.

Good roads, good cars and better-built cabins make it possible today for the “down belower”—marking off the calendar days until spring—to rush the season as he couldn't a few years ago.

In return, he is able to see the north country in an unknown mood. And he is able to accomplish those practical “musts” that all cabin owners face before spring “is bustin' out all over.” He must shut his eyes to it and wield the old paint brush, saw and hammer.

In north woods stores, paint and brushes crowd shelves next to cabin oils, stains and caulking. Also, the wise north country farmer is in—stocking up on the fix-its as he repairs electric fixtures, replaces loose shingles and looks over the latest in farm equipment.

Seed packets are bright spots among the paints and fixtures. Garden tools hint boldly that the frost will soon be out of the ground. Neither snow nor rain can thrust the prospect of another spring's arrival very far away.

And that arrival can bring a whole new world of pleasure to the men and women who know the north woods only in its other seasons.

Help compile *The North Woods Call* history

If you have stories to share about former publishers Marguerite Gahagan and Glen Sheppard, or photos and background information about the newspaper and its role in Michigan conservation history, please contact us at:

editor@mynorthwoodscall.com

Wanted

Correspondents

We would like to hear from quality writers & reporters interested in contributing conservation-related news from across Michigan—particularly in the northern lower and upper peninsulas, and the capitol city of Lansing.

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Norm Spring: Putting the brakes on pesticides

They say you can't fight city hall, but don't believe it.

Grand Haven's Norm Spring—a local ninth-grade speech teacher and school counselor—stood up and fought hard, to the everlasting benefit of Michigan residents, bald eagles, peregrine falcons, ospreys and other living things.

The battle began in the late 1960s when Spring and his family lived across the street from a city park, where elm trees were being sprayed with DDT to fight Dutch elm disease. They witnessed the devastating effects of the long-lasting pesticide when robins that fed upon earthworms began trembling and died before their eyes.

"It was pretty obvious it was lethal," said Spring, now 80-years-old and still living in Grand Haven.

Nearby Lake Michigan was also being impacted, the family noticed, as small and large fish—as well as the American bald eagle that feeds upon them—began to show the effects of DDT.

Young eagles, peregrine falcons and ospreys didn't hatch because the pesticide caused their egg shells to break before they could emerge naturally, according to Spring's wife, Barbara, who at the time was reading Rachel Carson's groundbreaking book "Silent Spring" and shared it with her husband.

"His reaction was visceral," she said. "He had to do something about it."

"I read the book and it got me excited," Spring said. "I was concerned about our kids, as well."

Spring—a Korean War veteran and graduate of Michigan State University (MSU)—marched down to city hall and asked that

the DDT program be suspended in the city park. When the program was not immediately halted, he brought experts in to explain to city officials why it should be.

The city countered the arguments with expert witnesses of their own from the Michigan Department of Agriculture and a heated debate ensued for the next three years.

But Spring didn't give up.

"I refuted everything they said," Spring recalled. "It was a constant battle."

Eventually, he convinced the city to switch from DDT to methoxychlor, although he much preferred that they didn't spray anything. They tried methoxychlor for a while, he said, before stopping the spraying altogether.

"No matter what they did, the trees kept dying," Spring said.

Next, Spring and a contingent of people from nearby Holland carried the battle statewide by forming the Michigan Pesticides Council in early 1968. The group met at Michigan State University with several noted conservationists on board—including Dr. Ted Black, Dr. George Wallace (of MSU), Dr. Howard Tanner (one-time director of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources), Dr. John Kitchell (then of the Michigan United Conservation Clubs), Joan Wolfe, Dr. H. Lewis Batts (of the Kalamazoo Nature Center and Michigan Audubon Society).

"Our primary purpose is to inform the public of environmental contamination and ... encourage action to save and correct the quality of our natural environment," Spring said at the time.

Most of the conservation organizations in Michigan were

Conservation Battlers

Without the efforts of countless individuals who have given time, money and talents to conserve and protect our natural resources, the world would be a much more unpleasant and unhealthy place to live. The North Woods Call honors these conservation soldiers and will periodically profile some who made a significant difference. If you know of someone—past or present—who deserves this recognition, please let us know.



Norm Spring still enjoys hunting in Michigan forests, and fishing on the state's abundant rivers and streams. A founder and past president of the Michigan Steelheaders Association, he was among the first to catch Coho salmon in Lake Michigan.

members of the council, according to Spring.

Together, council members steadily gained public support for their efforts to prevent the rapid rate of environmental deterioration, loss of wildlife and danger to human health caused by the misuse of pesticides.

Within several months after the council was created, then-Gov. William G. Milliken established a pesticide review board and initiated a five-state conference on pesticides.

"We are not opposed to pesticides," Spring said in a letter to the governor congratulating him on the action, "but we are opposed to their misuse, aerial spraying, over-spraying and particularly the

use of residual or hard pesticides which have caused our current problem by building up in our environment..."

By 1969, DDT was banned in Michigan—the first state to do so—and by 1972 it was banned across the United States.

"It took years for DDT to purge from Lake Michigan food chains," said Barbara Spring, "but today we often see bald eagles along the beaches and the Grand River that flows through Michigan. On January 4, 2003, the *Grand Haven Tribune* reported 46 bald eagles on the ice and in the trees not far from U.S. 31. About one-third of these were mature eagles."

Spring retired from his teach-

ing post in 1986. Prior to moving to Grand Haven, he had taught science in Oxford, Michigan, and was a school counselor in Sebewaing.

A founding member of the Michigan Steelheaders Association and past president of the North Ottawa Rod and Gun Club, Spring was involved in several local conservation battles before and after the pesticide fight, and formed a local environmental council on the first Earth Day in 1970.

"Occasionally I still get involved, but not like I used to be," he said. "I've slowed down as I got older, although I still get around all right, and still hunt and fish."

Spring and his wife have two daughters—Pam and Robin—and five grandchildren. He has often taken his grandson fishing and hunting, he said, and the boy—now in his first year of college—has a growing interest in conservation.

Barbara Spring said her husband's tenacity in fighting the pesticide battle inspired her to write her own book, "The Dynamic Great Lakes," because she wanted so show people that they have the power to make a difference through the democratic process.

"My wife says you can beat city hall if you're persistent," he said. "Somebody has to do it, but you have to put some energy into it—genuine energy and concern. I wouldn't consider myself an Erin Brockovich (a noted environmental activist), but we were able to accomplish some things."

"There is always somebody who says, 'They ought to do this or that,' but the question I ask is, 'Who's they?'"

MUCC supports hunting and fishing license fee increases for Michigan

Officials of the Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC) say that they're "very much in support" of "a simpler, smarter license structure and system" and feel that Gov. Rick Snyder's recent proposal provides just that—even though it includes some fee hikes.

Sustainable funding for conservation is important, they said in an executive summary of their position that appears on the organization's website, "as long as the funding is used appropriately and the expenditures are presented openly and clearly to the public."

That reportedly wasn't the case in 2007 when the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) "presented a doomsday scenario that would see massive cuts in programs and staffing in an attempt to increase license fees," the executive summary says. In reality, the DNR had a significant budget surplus.

Was it an accounting error? A public misunderstanding? Or something more cynical?

It probably doesn't much matter at this point, except the process and end result did tremendous damage to the DNR's relationship with those who supported a fee increase, as well as with the hunting, fishing and trapping community.

"What happened cannot be changed," the MUCC said. "What happens next can be."

Some work is still needed on the proposal to create a plan with which the MUCC is completely satisfied, they said, but the governor's plan is worthy of support.

Michigan has not had a fee increase since 1996 and the expectations of hunters, anglers and trappers have changed, according to the MUCC. More is demanded from the woods and water now than ever before, they said, so it's "unreasonable to expect more without putting more in."

State officials have outlined a number of areas where the additional funding would be spent—aimed at specific targeted outcomes. The MUCC has worked with the DNR and stakeholder groups to evaluate these plans and have suggested further information and some adjustments. There has been good response to these requests, they said.

Perhaps most importantly, according to the MUCC, the governor's proposal includes a five-year sunset which will allow for future changes if the results are not satisfactory.



Going, Going ... Gone!

After some 21,270 man hours of deconstruction work—and serious problems associated with an October breach and related downstream flood—Brown Bridge Dam on the Boardman River in Grand Traverse County has been removed. The work of dismantling the structure—the first of three historic hydroelectric facilities on the blue ribbon-designated trout stream slated for removal—began last summer and was completed in February. The project re-established 2.5 miles of river channel and 12.2 acres of floodplain through the handling and grading of 260,000 cubic yards of sediment that had accumulated in the former impoundment over 89 years. In addition, 985 lineal feet of woody debris was placed for bank protection and habitat, and 5,100 lineal feet for "in-stream habitat." Along the way, an estimated 37 painted turtles and one snapper turtle were rescued—as well as multiple fish—during dewatering activities. The final phase included the complete removal of the dam, powerhouse and dewatering structure. The AuSable Institute was engaged to perform macroinvertebrate assessments before and after dam removal and a draft report is currently under review. Concurrent with the dam removal project is a long-term planning initiative for the 291-square-mile Boardman River Watershed. Attention will now turn to the next two dam removals at Boardman and Sabin, as well as the Cass Road bridge replacement at the Boardman dam.

Opinion Page

Conservation Quote

"The conservation of our natural resources and their proper use constitute the fundamental problem which underlies almost every other problem of our national life."

— Theodore Roosevelt

Wolves: The call of the wild

While we haven't yet landed on a comfortable opinion about wolf hunting in Michigan, we are watching the ongoing debate with great interest.

On one hand, we understand the need to manage the wolf population and trust the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to do so wisely.

On the other hand, wolves represent the northern wilderness in all its glory and hold a special place in our hearts (witness the image on our masthead).

Over the years, we have read several fascinating books about these animals, their survival instincts and their social habits—Farley Mowat's "Never Cry Wolf" and Adolph Murie's "The Wolves of Mount McKinley" among them.

Farmers and other individuals caught up in human-wolf conflicts have good reason to protect their livestock, pets and property from these fearsome predators, but we don't quite understand why anyone would want to shoot them simply for sport. Perhaps readers can enlighten us about that.

We also look to the experts to tell us whether there are actually enough wolves in Michigan—some say less than 700—to justify the establishment of such a hunting season.

Maybe so.

"The wolf is a powerful animal and a cunning one," wrote Murie in the above-mentioned book, "and unfortunately has run counter to the economic interests of man in settled regions."

But what about the concerns of the state's Native American population? Tribal members have traditionally lived close to the land and reportedly view wolves with a sacred reverence that deserves to be respected and honored.

We encourage everyone to listen carefully to those on all sides of this issue, question our own motives, and examine the true nature of wolves and their place in the ecosystem.

Only then will we discover the best solution to this dispute.

"We have doomed the wolf," wrote Mowat, "not for what he is, but for what we deliberately and mistakenly perceive him to be—the mythologized epitome of a savage, ruthless killer—which is, in reality, no more than a reflected image of ourselves."

Biodiversity and the law

To hear Michigan Sen. Tom Casperson (R-Escanaba) talk about Senate Bill 78, which could restrict the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) from considering "biodiversity" when managing natural resources, it might sound reasonable.

The DNR, he says, makes a lot of recommendations related to land use, and those decisions need to be better vetted and more responsive to the public.

The bill—sponsored by Casperson and recently moved forward by the State Senate—is aimed in part at protecting access to public land for all users, the senator said. The public voice needs to be heard over the special-interest clamor of environmental groups, he said, and the DNR needs to listen to what the public is saying.

Be that as it may, we believe that biodiversity should be considered in decisions involving stewardship of public lands. There has to be a solid management standard that protects the environment—not to prevent legitimate uses of natural resources, or to keep the public from enjoying land that we collectively own, but simply to make sure the best decisions are made in protecting Michigan's outdoor assets for this and future generations.

In the same way that we don't want state officials ignoring public concerns in favor of special interests, we must prevent corporate entities, ATVs, and other often-damaging uses from running roughshod over the land, and threatening wild areas with unwarranted development and physical destruction.

We have seen both of these things occur over the years and there is no excuse for it. There will always be competing interests vying for limited resources, but we all have to be wise in choosing the path that benefits the most people over the long term.

The DNR is neutral on this bill, but we tend to agree with the opponents—as long as the agency makes these decisions wisely and doesn't ignore the practical need for resources, or dismiss the voices of citizens who want to protect our natural heritage.

It seems like Michigan bureaucrats and elected representatives are already making a lot of management decisions with a host of lopsided economic values in mind and we probably don't need to tip the scales any further in that direction.

(See the eloquent case against SB 78 outlined by Dr. John Richter on Page 5 of this edition).

"No child left inside"

The outdoor adventures of "Tom and Huck"

The coming of spring always brings back memories of growing up in rural Michigan when roaming the freshly awakened woods and wetlands was relatively safe and uninhibited.

My friends and I were free to do most anything we wanted in the Great Outdoors, as long as it was legal and we were home by suppertime.

It was a time—in our lives, at least—when it didn't take government programs and environmental activists to make sure that "no child was left inside." That was the last place any self-respecting kid wanted to be.

Richard Louv's 2005 book, "Last Child In the Woods," was decades away from being published and nobody in our orbit gave much thought as to where we would spend our days. It was simply assumed that we would be outside wading streams, climbing trees and generally burning off the youthful energy that many of us wish we still had today.

The mother of one of my friends often referred to her son and me as "Tom and Huck," reminiscent of the adventurous Mark Twain characters, Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn. We even tried to build rafts, as I recall, to float down tiny Spring Brook after the spring rains came.

Those were the days when parents didn't have to worry so much about their kids being kidnapped, murdered or otherwise harmed by criminal weirdos with ill-intent, although we were routinely warned to be wary of strangers before we headed out of the house.

Truth be told, the entire neighborhood kept watchful eyes and ears on us, and news of any misdeeds or trouble was likely to reach home before we did.

It was a time when we didn't lock our houses—unless the family expected to be gone for several days—ignition keys were always left in the cars and our garage door was seldom closed, day or night, from April through October.

And nothing ever came up missing.

In short, it was a glorious era to be growing up before the widespread lawlessness, violence and general disrespect for the rights of others metastacized and became the cancer on our society that it is today. No child that I knew

needed to be coddled and sheltered within the walls of a protected home or day-care facility.

So we roamed pretty much at will—camping, fishing, hunting, swimming, biking, wrestling, playing ball, building forts, catching frogs and exploring our world—from the time the morning chores were done until the skies darkened, night fell and we dragged our weary bodies up the stairs to bed.

The benefits were obvious. We strengthened our muscles, tested our endurance and got more exercise in one day than most children addicted to television, computers and electronic games get in a month—or more.

Even our most inactive moments (every kid needs to rest from time-to-time) still involved much social interaction with friends and neighbors—playing croquet on the front lawn, participating in marathon front porch games of Risk, or plotting our next outdoor adventure.

And the related discoveries were legion.

We might huddle beneath a trestle of the CK&S Railroad and feel the earth shake as the trains passed overhead, hike a few miles down the tracks to buy candy at the small store on Riverview Drive, dig spent lead from the sandy hillsides at nearby firearm target ranges, or search for lost arrows in the weeds behind straw-bale targets at the local rod and gun club.

Once, "Tom" and I found a pile of unopened mail along a side road. It had been stolen from a local seed company and we thought we had found a great treasure—especially when we ripped into the envelopes and retrieved several dollars in illegitimate cash that our parents promptly made us give back. That was OK, because we got something even better—a coveted ride in a patrol car when a sheriff's deputy came to investigate the incident.

Sleeping out at night—under the stars or in a canvas pup tent—was a special summertime treat and we did it as often as possible. Escaping the valley where we

North Woods Journal

By Mike VanBuren



lived to ride our bicycles five miles into the village of Richland also fueled our wanderlust and growing desire for greater freedom.

It's sad to think back on those times and realize what so many of today's children are missing.

Thanks in part to Louv's aforementioned book, many people are now realizing this disconnect and legislative efforts are being made to amend the 2001 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (No Child Left Behind Act) to include environmental education. Several states have already passed their own bills aimed at re-aquainting children with nature.

Such laws were largely unnecessary in our neighborhood when I was a child, but most things now seem to involve some kind of government action. Even so—like almost everything else—the political debate has been polarizing. Critics claim such legislation will be ineffective and is intended to spread a political agenda to children. Supporters insist that there are countless benefits to including environmental education in elementary and secondary schools.

With the deceitful and corrupt nature of modern politics, who knows what to believe?

One thing that's clear, however, is that children learn much and benefit greatly from being in the out-of-doors. And the best education comes when this experience is unencumbered by too many rules and regulations.

It's all about freedom—to explore, learn and absorb the rhythms of nature at one's own pace.

Maybe if we just turned the television off and put down our myriad electronic gadgets, our children could better see and taste the world around them.

Only then will their own curiosity lead them outside into the lives of fresh-air adventure that we all need for a more healthy and balanced life.

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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 won't publish addresses or phone numbers, but we must have them to verify that letters are authentic. No unsigned letters will be used. It's OK for your signature to be electronic.

Michigan forest health report

If you're concerned about the health of Michigan's 19.3 million acres of forest land, you'll want to look over the state's 2012 *Forest Health Highlights Report*, which discusses the impact of pests, diseases, drought, invasives, fire, etc. and what the DNR is doing to improve forest resources.

It's an interesting read reflecting a lot of good work.

Unfortunately, what isn't discussed are the impacts of hydraulic fracturing, strip mining, and other controversial interests that also threaten the vitality of land, water and public health.

Which begs the question, "Why not?"

Viewpoint

Biodiversity matters: A solid case for rejecting “anti-biodiversity” bill

By Dr. John W. Richter

Editor:

I am so grateful The Call is up-and-running again. This important voice has been sorely missing.

It might just be coincidence, but it seems like our state's legislature regarding natural resources (and many other things) has gone completely haywire since Shep's been gone. We need this forum like never before.

Thank you.

Attached is a letter I hope to share with whomever I can. I hope you can find a place for it.

* * *

Friday, February 22nd, 2013, marks one of the darkest days in Michigan's natural history.

That was the day Michigan's Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Environment and Great Lakes quietly passed Senate Bill (SB) 78, which specifically removes “Biodiversity” from the long-held stated goals and policies by which our state has managed our public-owned natural resources. If SB 78 becomes law, no longer will nature, diversity of species, or environmental quality be considered, or stand in the way of logging, mining, or drilling for oil and gas in our state forests.

Tragically, too few people recognize the significance or implications of this act.

The concept of “biodiversity” is the pillar upon which conservation and environmental protection is built. Modern science has determined that one of the best ways to measure environmental health and quality of life is the diversity of plant and animal species within a given community. Biodiversity also confers biological integrity, which means that all the necessary components to promote ecologic health are present and viable.

Managing our state forests to include biodiversity requires that we recognize and respect those elements that provide for the rich, balanced and diverse plant and animal

communities upon which we all depend. It also requires that we avoid those things that fragment, pollute and destroy that delicate balance.

Following the travesties of the logging era, the citizens of Michigan and their representatives enacted a series of laws and policies to ensure that such a thing would never happen again. They had witnessed, first hand, the wholesale destruction of Michigan's virgin forests, extinction of species and the ensuing degradation of our rivers and streams. Clearly etched in their minds was the wasteful result of unfettered exploitation of our shared natural resources.

They declared of “paramount importance” to: forever prevent such largescale deforestation and degradation, protect our natural heritage for the Public Trust and future generations, and promote policies and goals that foster biodiversity and ecological health. The concept of biodiversity was incorporated into our state's natural resource management policies and goals. The era of conservation was born.

Until recent years, the conservation and management of our public lands has been largely successful. For many years, Michigan was considered a world leader for fostering the rejuvenation of abundant public lands. Michigan's forests have regrown to become viable forest ecosystems with valuable timber. They have also healed to provide the diversity of plant and animal species as was hoped for and intended.

As a result, the waters of our streams and rivers run cleaner and faster. This rejuvenation has also provided a vast diversity of opportunities and uses for people who like to hunt, fish, canoe, hike, bird watch, snowmobile, ORV, or just want to get outside. It also provides for the responsible, sustainable harvest of high-quality timber and the extraction of minerals. This was made possible because respect for nature was the priority and biodiversity was a vital

management goal that kept the forest ecosystem healthy and vibrant.

Now, times have changed. Our re-born forests are seen as a commodity, open to the highest bidder. Our public lands have been leased for oil and gas extraction at unprecedented rates. The new, revised, State Forest Management Guidelines are focused squarely on logging with few spots spared. There are no provisions for “old-growth designation” or “natural areas.” Our pristine waters are being squandered, contaminated and permanently disposed of in alarming volumes.

The oil and gas industry has found ways to extract the vast reserves of natural gas buried deep beneath our public lands through a process called horizontal hydrologic fracking. These extractive and industrial-scale operations fragment, pollute and destroy natural habitats and ecosystems. They are not compatible with the principles or goals of biodiversity. In order for these exploitations to proceed, biodiversity must be removed as a management goal. S.B. 78 is a dark traitor to the proud legacy wrought by those heroes who fought and struggled to reclaim Michigan's natural heritage and restore its environmental quality.

But wait! These are public-owned lands. Our lands! These are my lands. These are your lands. Our children's and grandchildren's lands (and waters too!)—all 4.6 million acres of them. They were set aside and protected for good reasons. Who gave the OK to turn them over to the oil and gas and timber industries to exploit for private (even international) profit?

Governor Snyder heralded the advent of these ventures when he proclaimed that these industries will help lead Michigan out of its recession. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources has enabled these industries by leasing millions of acres of state land for oil and gas extraction. The new State Forest Management Guidelines focus

squarely on timber harvest and leave few places unscathed. The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality refuses to adequately regulate fracking and allows the toxic contamination of tens of millions of gallons of fresh potable groundwater.

Nowhere through the course of these events has the public been honestly engaged, or properly informed, by our state's officials. Instead, these decisions have been made quietly in closed rooms—as witnessed by the passage of SB 78—or crammed through during a lame duck legislative blitzkrieg. The groundwork has been laid for the commercialization of our public assets.

I urge all who read this letter to look into these issues seriously and soon. Sadly, I fear that the general public is too overwhelmed and worn out to put up much of a fight. The industries have mounted and sustained a massive and very effective public relations campaign filled with marvelous half-truths. It's no wonder that people are confused and struggling just to make ends meet. Jobs and cheap energy sound pretty good right now. However, we have not been informed of the short- and long-term costs associated with these activities.

Removing biodiversity as a goal and management tool of our public lands will open the flood gates of industrialization and pollution of our most special places. The scars these activities leave behind may never heal and they have the potential to pollute our beautiful Great Lakes State forever.

Are we willing to sacrifice our quality of life and that of future generations for a short-term profit most of us will never see?

SB 78 is shameful. Restore, protect and sustain biodiversity.

Dr. John Richter is president of the East Jordan, Michigan-based Friends of the Jordan River Watershed Inc.

Viewpoint

Hydraulic fracturing: What's happening in “pure” northern Michigan?

By Anne Zukowski

State Excelsior well 3-25 HD1 sits within the Mackinaw State Forest in Kalkaska County. This area of forest—previously used by hunters, mushroomers, snowmobilers, skiers and hikers—is now surrounded by “No Trespassing” signs. Acres of trees were clear-cut to accommodate well pads, open storage pits and roads. Truck traffic and noise are constant. This is becoming a common sight in our state forests.

Encana Corporation, owner of this particular well, holds the dubious distinction of using and contaminating the largest volume of water to date for one fracking event. According to FracFocus, an industry website, on October 30, 2012, Encana used a mind-boggling 21,122,194 gallons of water to frack one well. Mixed with a blend of toxic chemicals, this large-scale water withdrawal from ground water aquifers can never be returned to the hydrologic cycle. Two other wells fracked on the same pad brought the total water usage to over 42 million gallons.

How much water is 21 million gallons? The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) website explains that 5 million gallons—the amount used in a “typical” frack job—is equivalent to the amount needed to irrigate eight to 10 acres of corn for an entire growing season. Twenty-one million gallons would therefore irrigate 40 acres of corn for an entire season. Of course, most of the water used for irrigation returns to the hydrologic cycle, whereas frack fluid is so toxic it must be disposed of, and cannot return to the water cycle. In many parts of the country, extreme water use for fracking is heavily impacting the ability of farmers to grow food or raise animals.

Put another way, look at Tahquamenon Falls, the largest waterfall in our state. Roughly 5,000 gallons flows over the falls every second (U.S. Forest Service estimates). Watch the water cascading over the falls for one hour and 10 minutes. That represents the 21 million gallons of water used to frack just one well. (See video of Tahquamenon

Falls on DontFrackMichigan.org.)

Now picture our state with hundreds or thousands of wells, each sucking up and contaminating millions of gallons of water that should be replenishing our rivers, streams and the Great Lakes. This is water that could be used for growing crops. This is the water that defines our state and is the bedrock of our tourism economy.

What happens to this contaminated water (called flowback) after a well is fracked? Documents obtained from the DEQ through a Freedom of Information Act request by Ban Michigan Fracking indicated that at least 40,000 gallons were sprayed on our roads as dust control. This occurred during a 30-day period last summer in Cheboygan and Kalkaska counties. Areas sprayed include the Mackinaw Mill Creek Campground—located three miles from the Mackinaw Bridge and on a mile of Lake Huron shoreline—and public roads in Kalkaska County.

The DEQ permit to spray the roads was issued to Team Services, subcontracted by Encana Corp. This is the least expensive method of flowback disposal and has been perfectly legal under Michigan's antiquated rules. Brine (concentrated salts) is a waste product of gas and oil drilling, and has been sprayed on roads in Michigan for years as ice and dust control.

Michigan gas and oil rules classify all flowback fluid as brine, and although the DEQ issues permits for this use, rules regulating its use have not been updated to take into consideration the new chemicals and high volume of frack fluid from horizontal hydraulic fracking operations. According to Rick Henderson, acting director of the Office of Oil, Gas and Minerals, “The court ruling which set the standards for approving brines for dust and ice control did not anticipate large scale hydraulic fracturing.” The potential damage to plants, animals, groundwater, streams and lakes, and homeowner wells has not been studied in Michigan.

We do know, however, that of the hundreds of known chemicals generally used in deep shale fracking, 25 per-

cent cause cancer, 37 percent affect hormones, 40 to 50 percent affect the kidneys and nervous, immune and cardiovascular systems, and 75 percent affect sensory organs, and respiratory and gastrointestinal systems (from studies by the Endocrine Disruption Exchange).

We do know that in other states accidental spills and exposure to flowback fluid have killed livestock, wildlife and pets, poisoned water wells and caused a host of illnesses in people.

Public outrage forced the DEQ to temporarily suspend this method of disposal from hydraulically fracked wells for one year.

The “approved” method of flowback disposal is to shoot it underground into injection wells. This method hasn't worked out so well, either. Ohio, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Colorado, West Virginia and even England have experienced dramatic spikes in earthquake activity linked to underground injection of drilling wastes. According to Henderson, “... in Michigan, the chances of earthquakes are very small.” However, two fault lines run through northern Michigan where most of the injection wells are being located. Earthquakes, even very small ones, fracture rock which can allow for the upward migration of toxins.

ProPublica, an on-line investigative news service, reviewed records from 220,000 well inspections nationwide from late 2007 to late 2010. Well integrity violations were cited in one out of six wells. “Records show wells are frequently operated in violation of safety regulations and under conditions that greatly increase the risk of fluid leakage and the threat of water contamination.” (ProPublica “Injection Wells: The Poison Beneath Us” 10/26/12).

Also quoted in this article was Mario Salazar who worked for 25 years as an engineer and technical expert in the EPA underground injection program in Washington. He said, “In 10 to 100 years we are going to find out that most of our groundwater is polluted. A lot of people are going

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More Opinion

The Wild Nearby

By Tom Springer



39 bottles of wine by the road...

There's an otherwise scenic country road near my home that holds great appeal for aficionados of cheap wine. And not just any wine, but Arbor Mist.

While I've never drank the stuff, I now know this much. It costs around four dollars a bottle, rarely shatters on impact and comes in 12 tooty-fruity flavors that eventually all smell like putrid Kool Aid.

Now there's no reason to feel morally superior because your buzz comes from a \$20 bottle of Merlot with a genuine cork instead of a screw cap. Besides, when times are hard, there's a legitimate need for some cheap happy. Mix in a little slow dance and Michigan might even achieve positive population growth.

My problem concerns the containers that all that cheap happy comes in. If this year is anything like the last, we can expect a shiny harvest once the March rains melt the last roadside snowdrifts. On a walk with my wife and two daughters last spring, we picked up 39 empty Arbor Mist bottles—39!—that lay scattered along a two-mile stretch of road.

We'd brought along two empty trash bags, but they got so heavy and foul-smelling that we had to bring a car back and get them later.

After some initial grousing, the kids even made a game of it. They'd chant "Ar-bor Mist, Ar-bor Mist, Ar-bor Mist!" until they found another dead soldier—about every 200 feet or so. They also kept track of the most popular varieties.

Like a truck stop sommelier, my 9-year-old daughter's vocabulary now includes the terms Exotic Fruit and Sangria Zinfandel (which won hands-down). Although I'm afraid the moldy dregs she found inside the bottles may make her swear off fermented beverages forever.

But we also talked about the sad truth behind all this dismal litter. These weren't just picnic leftovers—sloppy kiss souvenirs from a summer of country love. Not when there's 39 bottles worth. No, this was likely the regular route of a solitary drunk; his *via dolorosa*, his highway to hell, if you prefer the vernacular. It's a grim business—addiction—and once you've been lured this far down the road, literally and figuratively, there's no pleasure in it. The party's long since been over. It's just drink, drive, toss out the window and repeat as necessary.

Given my newfound interest in nonrefundable rubbish, I decided to see which local convenience stores were purveyors of such rotgut. It didn't take much detective work: they all were. Free enterprise at work? Oh yes. Liquor companies will gladly target the market demographics of blue-collar despair. While the wine bottles carried government warning labels that spoke to immediate risk—"don't drive a car (ha!) or operate machinery"—they were silent on the threats of ruined lives, families and finances.

Still, the roadside clean-up made for good physical and civic exercise. Apart from infrequently picking up their rooms—which have a gross-out factor just a few notches below a fetid Arbor Mist bottle—I don't recall that we'd ever asked our kids to clean up someone else's mess.

It was, as they first pointed out, exceedingly unfair. But soon enough they'll be asked to clean up monumentally larger messes that were, likewise, not of their making: trillions in ill-spent government debt; two or three unfinished wars; the occasional oil spill and nuclear catastrophe.

And should they choose the vocation of parenthood, there'll be the dank surprises that lurk inside several years' worth of loaded diapers. Sooner or later they may even have a similarly attired Dad to attend (or Attends®, as the case may be).

I've noticed that the louder kids squawk about a sweaty hike or onerous household chore, the more they relish the memory afterward. That certainly proved true here. After their parent-mandated community service, the girls were proud and even a bit self-righteous about what we'd accomplished. A little of that's fine by me, though. Because after someone trashes your home ground, they've got no right tell you to put a cork in it.

Viewpoint: What's happening in "pure" northern Michigan?

(Continued from Page 5)

to get sick and a lot of people may die."

DEQ officials claim that Michigan has strong regulations to protect the environment. However, injection wells are only required to be inspected once every five years. And according to the *Michigan Oil and Gas News*, abandoned wells are omitted from reporting requirements after one year.

Fracking and injection wells are unsafe. How long can we poke holes in the ground, explode containment rock layers, inject dangerous chemicals and not expect to see negative repercussions?

We need to end federal and state environmental exemptions to gas and oil companies. End federal and state subsidies, including leasing of state land at rock-bottom prices and the permitting of large-scale water withdrawals. Multinational corporations should not be allowed to hijack our state land and confiscate our water. State land belongs to all the

people of our state.

According to *Michigan Oil and Gas News*, drilling is expected to increase in Michigan this year. We must keep working for a ban. And we must demand that our government officials look to the future.

According to the Department of Energy, Michigan has one of the highest potentials for wind energy production in the country. With our manufacturing capabilities, we should be putting subsidies into building solar panels and geothermal units.

Alternatives to fossil fuels exist, and by utilizing and developing them we can save our environment, our health and our economy.

Anne Zukowski of Charlevoix is a board member of Don't Frack Michigan, an Afton, Michigan-based group pushing for a ban of horizontal fracking in the state.

The red sled: Last journey for a beloved barn cat

He showed up in our barn on a cool fall night about six years ago. Wary of people, the big mutt of a cat was, however, on good terms with virtually all of the area's livestock.

I'd often seen him at a distance, touching noses and rubbing against the forelegs of ponies and quarter horses. Our goats, not known for congeniality, accepted him as a pen mate, allowing him to bed down beside them, and even to drink from their water-buckets. Unheard of.

The big guy became progressively more friendly as months passed. He'd lie on top of a stack of straw bales as I did chores, suddenly snoring my coat sleeve with sharp claws as I walked by. In the process of trying to extricate myself, he'd bite my fingers, always playfully and never hard enough to draw blood.

Eventually, "Big Boy," as we came to call him, showed up with the other barn cats for daily meals. He'd then traipse off on his "route," visiting most of the barns along this stretch of rural road. Our neighbors to the north nicknamed him "The Dog-Cat," due to his ability to quickly make friends with all of their many canines.

He received free meals wherever he went, and put on more than a few extra pounds over the years. Unlike most felines, Big Boy didn't devote much energy to chasing down wildlife. Other than an occasional rodent or barn sparrow, he was happily dependent on the food he could wangle from soft-hearted people.

He'd let me scoop him up in

my arms during moments of play, but would start to squirm after only a few seconds, wanting to be released and on his own again.

Of all the cats I've encountered, Big Boy was by far the most endearing—in a rowdy sort of way. He'd purr loudly and continuously at the slightest gesture of good will. And, like a dog, he'd always run to greet his acquaintances, regardless of species.

Then, on a cold and snowy day at the end of this past February, our favorite tomatcat skipped his meals. He also began to sleep a lot. Not too unusual. Most cats will do those things when not feeling well. They usually recover after two or three days. Big Boy didn't.

I found him one morning curled in a nest of sweet hay, in the same exact position he'd been in the night before. Rubbing him behind his ears produced no response. Nor would it.

Dying quietly in your sleep in a comfortable and familiar place doesn't seem too bad, upon reflection. Still, death always shocks people, even when it involves only a pet. My cheeks got unexpectedly damp as I picked up my furry buddy for the next-to-the-last time. He wasn't squirming.

There was a red sled leaning in a corner of the barn. One of our daughter's old toys—now used to haul bags of sand and gravel

around the farm. It was pulled via a length of clothesline attached to the front.

I placed Big Boy gently on the sled, with a blanket that he sometimes slept on wrapped around him. The ground was solidly frozen, and a foot of snow lay on top of that. Burial wasn't an option, but I did have an idea.

On the southern boundary of our property is a wide strip of trees and bushes, interspersed with brush piles. We began our long trudge through deep snow, in a bitter wind and under a patented slate-gray Michigan sky. Several hundred yards later I eased the old boy off his sled, laying him to rest at the base of a stunted red pine. He looked as if he were merely taking a snooze.

I covered him with a bower of branches to (temporarily) ward off scavengers, then stood quietly by to say a small prayer. More water on the face, this time requiring a bandana.

The empty red sled glided easily back to our barn along the trail we'd just made. The wind had dropped to a breeze, fresh out of the west. Clouds were thinning. Rays of sunlight were spilling through the overcast in a few places.

Somehow, I hoped Big Boy was enjoying the beauty of that sky.

Outdoor Rhythms

By Doug Freeman



Licenses for disabled vets

We applaud Michigan's new law allowing disabled veterans to get free hunting and fishing licenses, which became available March 1.

Legally blind anglers who are not disabled vets can also get their fishing licenses at "senior rates."

Such licenses will be offered each year at the same time regularly priced items go on sale.

With the sacrifices these veterans have made and the challenges that face the legally blind, it's the least we can do.

Call reader expresses unhappiness

Editor:

My friend Shep would be chagrined with what you're doing (and not doing) with his beloved *North Woods Call*. Cancel my subscription.

Sincerely,
Dan Brown
DeWitt, Michigan

Dan:

We're sorry you feel the way you do about our efforts to resuscitate The North Woods Call. We knew at the outset that it would be a challenge to operate in the shadow of someone who owned the newspaper for 42 years and had developed his own loyal following.

While we are always happy to receive constructive criticism from readers who care, your note was not helpful in terms of improving our work, as it contained no specific reference to what it is you don't like. We would much prefer to hear positive suggestions.

As it is, we have no clear idea what you are talking about.

I'm sure you know that The Call would no longer exist in any form if we hadn't made the effort to save it. It is inevitable that new owners will bring new approaches and new ideas, some of which will not please everyone (Heck, Shep couldn't please everyone, either). Nevertheless, we have tried to honor the legacy of those who went before us and will continue to do so.

Thanks for giving us a try.

—MPV

Coming Soon: Call Reader Survey

Look for another *North Woods Call* readership survey soon. We'd like to get your thoughts on a few questions aimed at gauging your interest and improving content of the publication.

Share Your Thoughts & Ideas

The *North Woods Call* welcomes letters & viewpoint articles. Write tightly & include your name and contact information. (Ideally, *Viewpoint* articles will be 700 words or less).

Conservation Officer Logs (2/18/13 through 3/3/13)**Unlicensed taxidermy, reckless snowmobiling & illegal trapping reported****DISTRICT 1**

COs Mark Leadman and **Ryan Aho** assisted the Upper Peninsula law enforcement drug team with the execution of a search warrant. During the search, unsealed and untagged wildlife specimens were found. Evidence of operating an unlicensed taxidermy business was also obtained. Enforcement action was taken.

CO Marvin Gerlach assisted a Wisconsin Warden with interviews of three Michigan subjects. The three men were operating snowmobiles in Wisconsin near the Michigan border at about 3 a.m. and failed to stop at a road crossing where the warden was patrolling. Two of the three subjects fled when the officer activated his emergency lights and attempted to make a stop. The two subjects then fled from Wisconsin into Michigan on their snowmobiles. The warden was able to identify all three subjects. All three face a variety of charges in Wisconsin; however, since the two subjects who fled also entered into Michigan, they are facing felony flee and elude and felony obstruction charges in Michigan as well. One subject stated that it was a pretty dumb choice to run, turning a potential minor ticket into felony violations.

DISTRICT 2

CO Mike Evink assisted Manistique Public Safety with a snowmobile vs. train incident. The snowmobile operator had missed a trail turn and ended up on railroad tracks. While attempting to find a way back to the trail, his sled then became stuck on a track switch. He then heard the train coming. He was able to get away from the track before the train hit his sled. The train was able to stop a half mile down the track.

CO Kyle Publiski was first on scene at a snowmobile accident. The subjects were uninjured, but the sled was badly damaged. It was then learned that the sled was a "rental." When notified, the local rental company came out and delivered another snowmobile for their customer. Off the subject went and within two miles he piled up the new sled into a group of trees, which completely totaled the second sled. **CO Publiski** was first on scene once again, and found the careless operator and his passenger were all right, other than some minor bumps and bruises. **CO Publiski** recommended to the rental business that they might not want to give the subject a third sled. The wife of the subject also agreed, as she was involved in both accidents riding on the back as her husband took her on the ride of her life.

DISTRICT 3

CO Andrea Erratt received a

call from a local deputy who said an angler had retrieved an ORV from the bottom of Lake Charlevoix and was asking for a salvage title. **CO Erratt** explained he could not have a salvage title and that they needed to find the rightful owner. **CO Erratt** ran a check on an old decal on the ORV and was able to get the owner's name and address. The **CO** talked to the owner, who said he was going to retrieve the ORV in May after the ice melted. **CO Erratt** explained that the ORV was leaking oil and gas in the lake and he should have immediately reported going through the ice. The owner was ticketed and given warnings on several violations.

DISTRICT 4

CO Carla Soper received information regarding a subject who had sunk his snowmobile after attempting to operate it across the Manistee River. When **CO Soper** contacted her local dispatch to get more information on the incident, she was advised that the snowmobile operator was now claiming that someone had removed his sled from the river and taken it. **CO Soper** and a Michigan State Police (MSP) trooper responded to the scene and found and interviewed the owner of the snowmobile. An investigation of the incident is ongoing and law enforcement action was taken for reckless operation of a snowmobile.

CO Brian Lebel was on patrol and observed a snowmobile disregard a stop sign. **CO Lebel** activated his emergency lights while the operator of the snowmobile fled. **CO Lebel** was able to track the snowmobile back to a residence and make contact with the intoxicated operator, who admitted to the violations. The subject stated that he did not want to go back to prison and was on parole for fleeing and eluding police. The subject was ticketed for eluding, reckless operation, operating with a suspended license, failure to transfer title, expired registration, no trail permit and operating under the influence of alcohol.

CO Mike Wells was reviewing fur harvester registrations and located a suspicious sealing. **CO Wells** interviewed the subject who was on record for sealing the otters. **CO Wells** obtained a confession from this subject that she allowed someone else to use her otter kill tags and then seal the hides in her name. **CO Wells** followed up with the licensed trapper responsible for taking the illegally sealed otters and discovered an additional illegal otter that was taken. **CO Wells** issued tickets to both subjects and all illegal hides were seized.

DISTRICT 5

COs Matt Liestenfeltz and **Mike Hearn** received a complaint

A NOTE TO READERS:

These are brief excerpts from the CO's bi-monthly field reports. To conserve space, we have excluded the more routine 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.

of coyote hunters possibly trespassing and not wearing hunter orange. The **COs** responded and contacted subjects in a motor vehicle with a loaded, uncased firearm. Three small children were also in the vehicle, some of whom were in car seats. Enforcement action was taken.

DISTRICT 6

CO Nick Atkin conducted surveillance for several hours on an angler who was ice fishing and caught several perch, but did not throw any back. Finally the angler positioned himself so the **CO** could quietly make contact. As the **CO** got closer, the angler noticed the **CO** and quickly started throwing perch back into the hole in the ice. The **CO** ran to the subject and ordered him to step away from the perch. The angler continued to throw fish back into the hole in the ice. The **CO** had to remove the angler from the perch to stop him from throwing the perch back. The **CO** collected the perch and found the angler in possession of 64 perch. Enforcement action was taken.

While traveling on a county road, **COs Seth Rhodea** and **Josh Wright** were passed by a vehicle travelling at a high rate a speed. The **COs** were able to determine the subject was driving over 90 mph and a traffic stop was made on the vehicle. Upon approaching the driver, **CO Rhodea** asked him why he was driving so fast. The driver said that he had just had a big argument with his wife. **CO Rhodea** then asked the driver where he was going and the driver stated that he was heading to his girlfriend's house. A ticket was issued.

While checking ice anglers in Sebawaing, **CO Bob Hobkirk** announced his presence to an angler fishing inside an ice shanty. The angler asked the **CO** to wait a moment so he could move his heater. As **CO Hobkirk** waited, he heard the subject dumping something down his fishing hole. When the shanty was opened, the angler stated that he had sorted his fish and had put back some smaller ones. He still had what he believed to be 50 perch in his bucket, a legal limit. After taunting the **CO** for not catching him with an over-limit, he was not happy when **CO Hobkirk** counted his fish and found that he was still over his limit. The angler was ticketed for having an over-limit of perch.

While patrolling Littlefield Lake, **CO Jeremy Payne** located a group of people shooting clay pigeons on the ice. As the **CO** got closer to the group, he witnessed one of the participants in a mad scramble pick up a dead rabbit, place it inside his coat and zip it up. When the **CO** asked him what was inside his coat he replied,

"Nothing." This person was unable to produce a small game license to possess this invisible rabbit. Other violations included uncased and loaded firearms in motor vehicles. Enforcement action was taken and the rabbit was seized.

DISTRICT 7

CO Chris Simpson was walking along White Lake checking ice anglers when he came across a group of five anglers who became somewhat evasive and uncertain about how many bluegills they had taken and in which buckets each angler had placed fish. After extensive questioning and recounting, **CO Simpson** ticketed one angler for an overlimit, one for no fishing license and warned another for taking a slight overlimit of panfish.

CO Greg Patten investigated a complaint of recyclables being dumped in the Muskegon SGA. After tracking the items to an address nearby, the **CO** discussed the situation and expected clean up with the resident he contacted. The next day **CO Patten** learned the homeowner's son and a friend were sent to the recycling center, but took an easier option by dumping the items in the SGA. A cleanup of the site is pending snow melt at this location.

DISTRICT 8

While on patrol, **CO Jeff Goss** observed a man standing at the end of his driveway clutching a shotgun. The man glared at **CO Goss** as he passed and, sensing that something was wrong, **CO Goss** turned around to make contact. Upon exiting his vehicle **CO Goss** asked the subject what he was hunting for. He indicated that he was protecting his property from two men down the road. After a few more questions it was obvious that the man was suffering from mental illness. **CO Goss** told the man that **Goss** needed to hold on to his firearm until they had everything sorted out. The man refused to hand over the firearm and a struggle ensued before **Goss** was able to disarm him. After securing the loaded shotgun and checking the man for more weapons, the man was transported to a local hospital for a psychological examination.

CO Derek Miller patrolled Lenawee County and saw a large

amount of black smoke rising from behind a house. He went to investigate and found two subjects standing over a burn pile. As he pulled up, the fire began to grow and the smoke was pitch black, and blowing over a state highway, causing a hazard. **CO Miller** talked to the subjects at the scene and observed several large pieces of rubber, treated wood, wire, and some other plastics on the fire. The subjects were issued a ticket, and some of the material was pulled from the fire.

DISTRICT 9

CO Kris Kiel was contacted by a MSP trooper who received a complaint of trespassing and illegal snares. The **CO** walked the property and found four illegal snares and two leg-hold traps. One leg-hold trap was baited with peanut butter and none of traps were set in good locations. Combined with the fact that small footprints were found, **CO Kiel** believed he was dealing with a young trapper. The **CO** followed the footprints back to a residence where he was greeted by a 15-year-old and his father. **CO Kiel** explained the trapping regulations and issued warnings. The young trapper said that he had watched a couple *YouTube* videos on how to set traps and snares. A hunting and trapping guide was provided on how to do it legally.

CO Al Schwiderson received a RAP complaint in progress of a subject who shot a turkey. The **CO** responded and contacted a female at the residence who said she had not been home but her son may have been. She gave the **CO** permission to look around. As **CO Schwiderson** was heading to the back of the property to look for evidence, he observed a light on in a barn. As he looked in the window, he saw a male subject with a turkey in his hand standing next to an ORV the complainant said was used to pick up the bird. When the **CO** announced his presence, the subject dropped the turkey and attempted to hide in the barn. The **CO** knocked several times and the subject would not respond. **CO Schwiderson** went to another window and looked in and saw the subject hiding and talking on his cell phone. After several attempts to get him to come out, the subject finally came out and told the **CO** the story of the turkey that was hit by a car. After some discussion, the subject admitted to shooting the turkey illegally. His mother was not happy. The bird was seized and enforcement action was taken.

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Final Shot



Natural Disaster Fund

—Rick Baetsen photo

Last summer's Duck Lake area fire in Michigan's Upper Peninsula helped prompt Gov. Rick Snyder's proposal to create a Disaster and Emergency Contingency Fund. Snyder has called for \$4 million in the 2013-14 fiscal year budget to use to respond to forest fires, tornadoes, floods and other natural disasters. The Duck Lake fire in Luce County burned nearly 33 square miles of land—consuming 21,060 acres, and destroying 136 homes, cabins and recreational vehicles. Property losses alone were in the millions of dollars, not to mention the cost of emergency personnel and equipment.



A Blessing Or Curse?

—Michigan DNR photo

Wildfires are fearsome and damaging, while controlled burns—such as this one in southeast Michigan—are needed to help restore and maintain the state's natural ecosystems. According to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, prescribed burns—mostly done during the spring and fall—are smart management tools that improve wildlife habitat, help forest regeneration, restore native plant life and control invasive species.

Just who were Maggie and Shep?

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Michigan forest fire safety

Last year's Duck Lake Fire in Michigan's upper peninsula dramatically illustrated the ferocity of flames.

But fires can also be a smart resource management tool—if well-controlled and safely used. In fact, carefully managed fires are necessary to restoring and maintaining Michigan's natural ecosystems, according to Don Johnson, head of the fire program in the Michigan Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) Forest Resource Division (FRD).

"We burn pine barrens, oak savannahs and prairies," Johnson said. "And we also burn wetlands, where we are using fire to help us control invasive plants, especially phragmites."

While such prescribed burns are part of the program, the bulk of the DNR's emphasis is on preventing and suppressing wildfires across much of the state, officials said. These fires are fueled by leaves, needles and limbs that are still attached to trees, they said, as well as surface material such as dead and live grasses, fallen leaves and needles, and woody debris.

The weather, of course, influences these fuels through drying that is caused by higher temperatures, little rain, low humidity and wind.

Michigan's efforts to prevent fires dates back to 1817 when territorial Gov. Lewis Cass signed penalties into law for negligently setting fires and allowing them to escape. Preventing wildfires is as important now as it was then.

"Everyone needs to be mindful that any time they strike a match there is a responsibility to be cautious with that flame," said Paul Kollmeyer, DNR wildfire prevention specialist. "People aren't living in isolation like the early woodland pioneers. Structures are commonly threatened at the scene of most wildfires today and larger fires place entire communities at risk."

In recent years, the DNR has focused on delivering these messages via radio, movie theater and television media campaigns which focus largely on the careless burning of debris, Kollmeyer said, but new strategies are needed. This year, attention will center on "ember awareness," he said, and the need to quench hot coals from campfires, burn piles, or discarded barbecue and wood stove ashes. Similarly, fireworks users are urged to use caution when handling them near flammable vegetation.

"Smokey Bear remains an incredible icon," Kollmeyer said. "People love having Smokey show up at an event. Just with his presence, a fire prevention message is delivered."

Among other things, it's important for citizens to remember that burn permits are required anytime the ground isn't snow-covered. In northern Michigan, permits are issued through the DNR. In southern Michigan counties, permits are issued through local governments.

—Michigan DNR

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