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Charges filed against Chesapeake & Encana

Two Midland men have been arrested on charges of illegally buying Michigan black bears and black bear parts, according to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

The charges, authorized by the Midland County Prosecutor’s Office, are the result of an undercover investigation by the DNR Law Enforcement Division’s Special Investigations Unit.

At this writing, the case was pending arraignment of the defendants in the 75th District Court in Midland County. Names of the defendants were being withheld until the arraignment, officials said.

A conservation officer assigned to the Bay City District received information that one of the subjects was contacting hunters and soliciting the purchase of black bear parts. Investigators established undercover contact with the suspects and an associate based on this information. A number of transactions involving black bears and black bear parts were conducted with the suspects.

Each of the seven counts against the defendants carries a fine of up to $1,000 and 90 days in jail, plus $1,500 in reimbursement per animal that was illegally bought.

“Individuals soliciting for the purchase of black bear parts creates a market for the illegal parts and provides a financial incentive for poachers to take the animals during closed seasons—in excess of established limits and by unlawful methods,” said Detective Lt. Jason Haines. There is a black market for black bear parts in Asia, where the parts are used for medicinal purposes, he said.

“The Special Investigations Unit plays a vital role investigating and arresting major violators, and its cases often include interstate and international violations,” said DNR Law Enforcement Division Chief Gary Hagler. “The unit’s role in the Law Enforcement Division is to use undercover investigations, the latest in technology and forensics to apprehend poachers, and others who are illegally commercializing fish and game in our state. The unit works with our conservation officers to build strong cases and to protect our natural resources.”

Anyone with information about the illegal commercialization of any Michigan wildlife or fish, or any natural resources violations should call the Report All Poaching hotline at 800-292-7800.

—Michigan DNR report

Men arrested for buying black bear parts

Michigan Attorney General Bill Schuette has filed criminal charges against Oklahoma-based Chesapeake Energy Corporation and Delaware-based Encana Oil and Gas USA.

The two firms allegedly collaborated to avoid bidding wars against each other in Michigan public auctions, and private negotiations for oil and gas leases. The activity reportedly caused prices to plummet.

“I will aggressively prosecute any company who conspires to break the law,” Schuette said when his Corporate Oversight Division filed the charges. The current charges are merely accusations, he said, and the defendants are presumed to be innocent “until and unless proven guilty.”

Public auctions of state-held oil and gas leases are held twice yearly—one in May and once in October—by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR). During the DNR’s May 2010 auction, both Chesapeake and Encana purchased natural gas leases in Michigan.

In 2012, the Reuters News Service uncovered a possible conspiracy between executives of the two companies in which they allegedly discussed an agreement following the May 2010 auction to split up Michigan counties where each company would be an exclusive bidder for both public and private leases.

In the five-month period following the May 2010 auction, this alleged conspiracy may have been a key driver behind the state-held lease price in Michigan going from $1.510 per acre in May 2010 to less than $40 an acre at the October 2010 auction.

The following charges were filed against the companies on March 5:

* One count each of antitrust violations relating to a contract or conspiracy in restraint of commerce. This is a high court misdemeanor punishable by up to two years and/or $10,000 fine for an individual, or up to $1,000,000 for a corporation; and,

* One count each of attempted antitrust violations. This is also a misdemeanor punishable by up to one year and/or $1,000 fine.

Representatives from both Chesapeake and Encana were scheduled to be arraigned on March 19 in Cheboygan County’s 89th District Court.
Urban sprawl edges north

By Glen Sheppard

A few years ago—no more than ten—Belleville was as small town-ship as a small town could be. Residents of the less-than-2,000 popu-lation western Wayne County community were annoyingly proud of their picturesque village. There was still a lingering suspicion that they had something they shouldn’t share with “outsiders.”

All that’s gone. It’s hard to find the village among the thousands of new homes, factories and businesses which now surround its former well-defined city limits. Where the “city” once ended and the farms started. Now it’s one big, sprawling checkerboard of houses.

There were those who tried to warn the city and township planners that they should, and could, stop it. But few listened.

Now, I’m told, the newspaper office is being moved. There will still be a newspaper, but it will be edited from a “central” office somewhere in the jungle of suburbia.

That’s the kind of environment a community newspaper—and a small town—thrives in. Unless people have the time and concern to “care” about everything that is happening to their town, it can’t sur-vive and it won’t support a community newspaper.


But this isn’t the “Suburban Call,” so why ponder a tragedy that happened so far from the north woods? Because it is happening here. The north country’s small towns are in danger of out-growing, or out-spreading, themselves. In a real sense, every north woods county is a small town. And our counties, too, are trying to escape their per-sonality.

Small towns are often committed to the idea of growth and in-dustrial development. Clayton Denman writes in a pamphlet pub-lished by the Small Towns Institute. “This is based on the misconception that the ideal is to become a city and that such towns are lagging behind. Instead, it should be recognized that smallness has its own advantages which inevitably disappear with growth. Such advantages as friendliness, quiet, compactness and diversity.

Denman also makes these observations:

“Development is not necessarily bad, but it should come, if possi-ble, from within the community itself. Local development would at least make it more likely that those involved would retain some feel-ing for the town life and tradition.

“Some small towns have matured into prosperous and sound com-munities by following an effective community plan. The danger is that such workable plans encourage outsiders to settle in these towns. “Urban people may inadvertently destroy the places they moved to exploit this system, the MUCC says.

The proposed bill, however, says it would still be illegal to keep migratory birds, cub bears, wolves, spotted fawn deer, elk and moose. Currently, a person who hits a deer, or other game animal, with a vehicle must request a salvage tag from a law enforcement officer in order to keep the animal for food, the hide, or bait, according to the Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCK). The system has been in place since 1989 to close a loophole that allowed people to claim the hide and meat of animal they struck with their vehicle, rather than confessing that they shot it out-of-season, or without a license. Poachers often exploit this system, the MUCK says.

Under the proposed legislation, people who want to keep road kill will either have to get a salvage tag as currently required—or 1) call the DNR, or a local law enforcement agency, or 2) fill out a form on the DNR website. The reporting requirement, however, would not apply to small game, which is a concern to the MUCK. “Hunters will all now carry a base license,” MUCK officials said, “which would allow them to legally keep small game killed, so there is little reason for this ex-emption.”

Turkey and deer hunters, [as well as] trappers, may also be concerned that people could keep a vehicle-hit animal with only a phone or online report, rather than direct oversight by law enforce-ment.”

The DNR would still be able to restrict salvaging dead game ani-mals in small towns, as well as public health concerns. 

Proposed change to animal salvage tags for road kill

State Sen. Darwin Booher (R-Evart) wants to change the animal salvage tag system in Michigan.

He has proposed new legisla-tion (Senate Bill 613) to make it easier for people that hit game ani-mals with their vehicle to keep them, while still giving the De-partment of Natural Resources (DNR) a record of the kill.

The proposed bill, however, says it would still be illegal to keep migratory birds, cub bears, wolves, spotted fawn deer, elk and moose. Currently, a person who hits a deer, or other game animal, with a vehicle must request a salvage tag from a law enforcement officer in order to keep the animal for food, the hide, or bait, according to the Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCK). The system has been in place since 1989 to close a loophole that allowed people to claim the hide and meat of animal they struck with their vehicle, rather than confessing that they shot it out-of-season, or without a license. Poachers often exploit this system, the MUCK says.

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North Woods Call Photo

The Final Insult?

Just when we thought the bright sunshine, warmer temperatures and melting snow signaled an end to win-ters, we were slammed by another storm that dropped eight more inches of wet, heavy white stuff on the North Woods Call homestead. Consequently—a mere week before spring officially began—we were back on the snowplow clearing a clogged driveway. To add insult to injury, the thermometer then dropped below zero and froze the remaining puddles for another day. At this writing, the mercury was back in the mid-30s and we were hoping that the worst winter around these parts in recent memory had moved on. But we’ll see.

North Woods Notes

(Apart from Page 1)

APRIL NRC MEETINGS: The Michigan Natural Resources Commission (MRC) meeting will be held April 10 at the Michigan State University Diagnostic Center, 4125 Beaumont Road, in Lansing. For more information about the agenda, visit the Michigan Department of Natural Resources website at michigan.gov.

PROTESTORS RELEASED: Three women—arrested last July and found guilty Jan. 31 of resisting and obstructing police during a summer 2013 protest of an Enbridge oil pipeline—were released in early March by Ingham County Circuit Judge William Collette. Vicci Ham-melin of Michigan City, Ind., Barbara Carter of Detroit and Lisa Leggio of Holland were credited for time they already served in jail. The women, who were involved with the Michigan Coalition Against Tar Sands, af- fixed themselves to large pieces of machinery near Stockbridge, Michi- gan, where Enbridge was working to replace and increase the capacity of its 6B pipeline. The same pipeline ruptured near Marshall in 2010, snaking through more than 800,000 gallons of heavy crude into the Kalamazoo River and Talmadge Creek.

ANTI-FRACKING MOVIE: Public screenings of the film “Gasland II” will be hosted by the Committee to Ban Fracking in Michi-gan, which is working on a ballot question to eliminate horizontal hy-drofracturing and related wastes in the state’s oil and gas development. The free showings of the film by Josh Fox will be from 6 to 8:30 p.m. Mar. 21 at the Elk Rapids Township Hall in Elk Rapids, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Mar. 25 at the Morton Township Library in Mecosta, 2:50 to 5 p.m. at the Chelsea District Library in Chelsea, 7 to 9:30 p.m. at Edge-wood United Church of Christ in East Lansing and 5:30 to 8 p.m. at Hastings Public Library in Hastings. Donations will be appreciated.

PURE MICHIGAN HUNT: It’s time once again to apply for the upcoming Pure Michigan Hunt drawing. Three winners are selected each year to receive an elk, bear, spring and fall turkey and antlerless deer license—as well as first choice opening morning at any of Michi-gan’s world-class managed waterfowl hunt areas across the state. An ad-ditional prize package is also awarded. Applications can be purchased for $5 each in unlimited quantities anywhere hunting licenses are sold, or online at a www.mdnr-elicense.com.

Public to review Jordan River proposals

The public is invited to review proposals to replace the twin cul-verts on the Jordan River with a clear-span bridge at the Old State Rd. crossing.

Two new public access sites are also being planned to complement a new bridge and accommodate the growing number of river users. A meeting to discuss the pro-posals is scheduled for 5 to 7 p.m. Mar. 25 at VFW Post 7580 at 4900 MI-32 Highway in East Jordan.

These projects will impact many people and cost significant money, organizers say, so it’s important to consider as many perspectives as possible.

The Jordan River crossing at Old State Road is plagued with fundamental design problems, said Dr. John Richer, president of Friends of the Jordan River Wa-tershed. “These ultimately result in pollution, erosion, congestion, and public health and safety prob-lems. This is a popular spot and nobody wants to deliberately harm the river, but unless we redesign this site, normal activities will de-grade the river and accelerate problems that already exist.”

During the meeting, members of the work group will offer de-tails, answer questions, take com-ments and receive suggestions.
Three suspects from Bay and Saginaw counties—reportedly involved in the illegal killing of a cougar—were arraigned Oct. 14 in Schoolcraft County District Court. Two of the suspects pleaded guilty and the third entered a plea of guilty.

According to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the crime occurred at the Richard’s hunting camp in Germfask Township near Seney on Dec. 9, 2013. The animal was shot from the subjects’ camp when it walked into a deer food plot and the deer ran out of the field as the subjects were muzzlesloader hunting for deer. The animal was wounded by Troy Richard with a center fire 22-caliber rifle and it then fled the food plot. The following day, it was tracked and located approximately one-quarter mile away and killed.

Investigators said Troy and Theodore Richard then brought the animal back to their camp, where they field dressed and hid it—then cooked and ate part of the heart. They left for their homes in Bay County shortly after, with the animal intact, but field dressed, in the back of Troy Richard’s pickup truck.

Troy Richard reported that he struck a deer with his truck after leaving the camp. He picked up the deer, put it in a trailer with other deer they had killed and transported it to the Michigan State Police post in St. Ignace. There he obtained a permit for the road kill deer—all while having the cougar in the truck’s bed under a tonneau cover so that it could be hidden from view. DNR officers noted that Richard had ample opportunity to report the cougar killing at this point, but failed to do so.

Troy Richard returned to his residence with the cougar, where the animal was skinned and prepared for mounting. The skull was also boiled and preserved, and the remains of the carcass were disposed.

When the Richards’ learned that DNR conservation officers knew about the poaching, they attempted to hide the evidence. Their story reportedly gave many false statements and had officers searching several areas in the Upper Peninsula, where they claimed to have disposed of the entire cougar. They repeatedly denied that they took the animal home with them.

The cougar hide, which had been prepared for mounting, and the skull were eventually recovered. The entrails of the adult male cougar were also found at the Richards’ camp. The suspects ultimately pleaded guilty as part of one agreement—on a one-in-a-lifetime chance to kill a cougar in Michigan and have it mounted.

Cougars are on the Michigan endangered species list and are a protected animal that may not be hunted.

Great Lakes Comeback

Last spring’s low water levels in the Great Lakes—shown here along Grand Traverse Bay on Old Mission Peninsula—will likely not be so much of a problem this year, according to federal officials. The lakes are expected to continue a steady recovery, thanks to widespread ice cover that is slowing evaporation and snowfall which has approached record amounts in some areas. Polar air that has gripped the region this winter has caused the most extensive freeze-over of the lakes since the record-setting year of 1979, when nearly 95 percent of their surface area solidified. In early March, the Associated Press reported that the ice cover had reached its highest point since then—91 percent. Meanwhile, the snowpack collected in the watershed will melt this spring and much of the water will flow into the lakes—or the streams that feed them. Some areas will likely be in danger of flooding, officials said, and any additional rainfall will only add to that threat. Remind us again why much money was spent on dredging last year...

World-record Michigan fish a “best catch”

The International Game Fish Association (IGFA) has included a Michigan muskelunge on its list of the “best” catch or release fish of the year. As previously reported in The North Woods Call, the Great Lakes muskelunge was caught Aug. 1, 2012 on Lake Superior in Chippewa County by John Seitz of Bay City and measured 78.5 inches and weighed 88 pounds.

The winning entry will receive the Angler’s Choice Award at an IGFA ceremony in April.

Can we still be friends? A continuing dialogue with the Au Sable River

It’s easy to be friends with a river in the glorious seasons of sunshine and warmth. We’re even friends with the river in the winter, when the river is covered in ice and snow. We’re friends with the river when it’s spring and the snow is melting and the river is running. But what about the river in the summer? What about the river when it’s hot and humid and the river is polluted with debris and trash?

Life happens, and sometimes for a time on the Au Sable River on a beautiful day—with the sun shining down, eagles soaring, fish cruising and flies buzzing—is heaven on earth.

I don’t think I can add much to the praises that have been sung to the Au Sable in this regard. But what about those days when a river is cranky, impatient, or over- active? What about those days when the river is not so cooperative? I am reminded of a few recent experiences when my new friend had its proverbial river shots in a bunch.

We had the rich opportunity to join our dear friends for a float in an Au Sable river trip. It was my first venture on this fine method of transportation. Doesn’t its name just sing to you? It’s a very smooth, cool, sunny—no a completely different and serene river. The river banked softly and our gear was set on the bank. As we were fishing, we noticed a lovely snack packed and the rods at the ready—and we pushed off. The absolute second that the boat touched water, the clouds descended and the river started pouring. Nonplussed, we carried on.

Don’t get me wrong. It was a beautifully float. How could it not be a wonderful river experience? We talked about all the important things in life. We fished a few flies out into those cozy little places where—if we were trout—we would have risen. We then realized it was really cold; shivers of an intensity that had never hit us before. The river simply stopped, put on its hoods, quickly and waved sensitively at us as if to say, "Please take us with you.” At the same time, we observed a family of dad, mom and son—clearly bivouacking at the bend for the night—wincing at the noise. They looked fortuitously at us as it to say, "Please take us with you.” The river continued its naughty trickery to the screening coming from the water’s edge. The river kept running, but it felt like a No- vember day. We packed up quickly and wound sensitively at the soulful-looking family as they put on their hoods.

Now it should come as no surprise to any of us that a diversity of people come to play in the river. It also is not my place to judge those three men who tried so hard to entertain us as best they knew how. But it’s a little interesting to think that the river changed so dramatically, as these lovely gentlemen sat at another water hole, under a moose horn. Coincidence? I don’t think so.

On another glorious afternoon, our family headed downstream for a nice, long float. As we took a sharp turn, the newly-noted thunderheads in the sky said, "Perhaps not.” Again, the changing nature of the Au Sable was obvious. The gentle gales and frisky friendliness instantly disappeared and the river bared its teeth. The wind whipped across the top of the water, practically hissing. "Whoa!” we said. We quickly turned the vessels toward a convenient stopping point, but we had no options for cover. Ever resourceful, my husband whipped up a large tarp from the bottom of the canoe and we ducked underneath it just as the rain blasted down. The four of us sat on the edge of the canoe laughing away, the rains sounding like hail on the tarp. "I love this family!” said older sister, in a burst of exuberance.

The husband got extra brownie points for sure. A brief boom of thunder caused a pause, but I knew that the rain wasn’t going to stop. We got the canoe away from the shore, just to be safe. I knew in my heart that it wasn’t the river’s fault. Life happens and sometimes for —North Woods Call photo

River Reflections

By Betsy Hayhow Hemming

As previously reported in As 4-Hour (resident or non-resident) age 65 or older — $11
• Resident Annual — $26
• Non-Resident Annual — $76
• Senior Annual (for residents age 65 or older) — $11
• Non-Resident (If resident or non-resident) — $10
• 72-Hour (resident or non-resident) — $30
Resident non-residents can also purchase the hunt/fish combo license for $76 and $265, which consists of a base license, annual fishing license and two deer tags. A base license is not required when just purchasing a fishing license.

The changes to hunting and fishing license fees are expected to bring additional revenue to state coffers.
Opinion

“Getting on the subject of beautification is like picking up a tangled skein of wool. All the threads are interwoven—recreation and pollution control, mental health, the crime rate, and rapid transit, and highway beautification, and the war on poverty, and parks—national, state and local. It is hard to hitch the conversation into one straight line, because everything leads to something else.”

—Lady Bird Johnson

Price-fixing and big business

It had been several months since we received any response from the Michigan Attorney General’s office to our inquiries about the agency’s bid-fixing investigation of Chesapeake Energy and Encana Oil & Gas.

We thought perhaps they were stonewalling for some unknown reason. Turns out that the investigation just took longer than we expected. The charges against the companies now have been filed (see story on Page 1). Our apologies, Mr. Schuette, for being suspicious.

The two firms are, of course, protected innocent until proven guilty but we’re pleading comment on that until another time.

For those companies that are tempted to do the thing of how for which the defendants are charged, however, this let be a warning. There’s no place for collusion and unfair bidding practices across Michigan, let alone during auctions of public resources.

We’re pleased to see the attorney general taking a tough stand on this matter.

2014 Environmental Hall of Fame

We are pleased to hear that some folks long connected to The North Woods Call as readers and news sources will be inducted into the Michigan Environmental Hall of Fame next month.

As reported in the “North Woods Notes” on Page 1 of this edition, Norm Spring, Joan Wolfe, Don Inman and Dave Dempsey have been selected as the next group of individuals to receive the honor. The Clinton River Watershed Council was chosen as this year’s nonprofit organization.

Positive change doesn’t always happen easily. The road to civic improvement is often long and difficult—filled with potholes and numerous other obstacles that require much strategic thinking, and even more personal tenacity. Leaders like these have proven time-after-time that they have the wisdom, courage and fortitude to think about such change in the face of seemingly in surmountable odds.

As a result of these gallant efforts, Michigan and the nation in general are much better off today.

We applaud the efforts of concerned citizens who are alarmed by the destruction of our natural landscape—especially highway billboards—and to improve, we have relegated the cooped-up senses.

We support the right of businesses and corporations to make consumer messages that assault the natural landscape. In fact, I’d like to at-

Some roadside advertising contains useful public service announcements, but the billboards on which these messages appear still block views and mar landscapes, even in urban areas. —North Woods Call photo

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Controversial pipeline needs to be reconstructed to cross the straits on a bridge

By Alex Sagady

As to the Enbridge Line 5 Mackinac Crossing matter, Grist said:

“The Straits of Mackinac epitomizes a potential worst-case scenario for a pipeline accident: an iconic waterway, ecologically and economically significant, that could beinfinitely hard to clean up because ofswift currents and deep water that’s often covered with ice several months a year.”

In December, Sens. Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.), Carl Levin (D-Mich.) and Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) sent a letter of concern to federal pipeline officials about environmental risks posed by the aging pipeline.

Don’t make the same mistake of being sat-

or not.

Enbridge already has a bad rep in Michigan after one of its pipelines burst in 2010 and poured over a million gallons of tar-sands oil into the Kalamazoo River wa-
tershed. According to the Natural Resources Defense Council, that little oopsie was the costliest pipeline disaster in the nation’s history—and, because tar-sands oil is far more difficult to clean up than the standard variety, the cleanup is still going on three and-
a-half years later.

A cleanup in the straits—where parts of the pipeline lie under 270 feet of water—would be much harder still, as the Associated Press notes.

Source: “Sunken Great Lakes Oil Pipeline Raises Spill Fears,” The Associated Press.

Environmental groups and state officials should consider requiring Enbridge to construct its pipeline across the Straits of Mackinac on some kind of bridge, says environmental consultant Alex Sagady (see comments below). If an independent structure isn’t feasible, they might consider routing it under the existing Mackinac Bridge, he says.

—North Woods Call photo

A Trust Betrayed: The Untold Story of Camp Lejeune, North Carolina

Speaking of public trust issues, here’s one from outside Michigan that should be of interest to Americans in general and conserva-
tionists in particular.

It’s about the poisoning of thousands of U.S. Marines and their family members at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, in what is said to be the largest drinking water contamination case in the nation’s his-
tory.

We just received notice of this book—published by St. Martin’s Press in 2011—and haven’t had time to read it ourselves, but we’ll put it on the stack and get to it as soon as we are able.

Written by tenacious reporter Mike Magnier—a former Kalama-
zo Gazette colleague of ours from years past—the book tells a story that began in 1941 when the Marine Corps opened a base on the At-
lantic shores to practice beach landings during World War II. For the next 40 years, the Marines apparently dumped toxic wastes at nu-
erous locations around the installation, which ended up seeping into the groundwater that still supplies the base.

According to promotional material for the book, it wasn’t until the 1980s that wells containing industrial-strength solvents, benzene from spilled fuel and other hazardous chemicals were tested and taken offline. By that time, harm had been done to many base resi-
dents, especially babies exposed to the pollution in the womb—with-
out anyone even knowing it.

When a federal health study in 1997 estimated that more than 100 children born at Camp Lejeune suffered from cancer or birth defects, victims of the contamination began to demand a full accounting. Seventeen years later, after many years of resistance and inaction on the part of the Marine Corps and the Department of the Navy, health studies are continuing, lawsuits are advancing and many affected parties are still waiting for compensation from the government.

Kirkus Reviews calls Magnet’s book “a fast-moving, smartly de-
tailed story of an environmental disaster compounded by the Corps’ broken promise”—“We take care of our own—to the men [and women] who served and suffered,” and adds that “this book is the first complete account of what really happened—an adroit mixture of detailed factual reporting and disturbing accounts of the serious health problems suffered by individual Marines and their families.”

“A Trust Betrayed” is available in stores and online.

We can say from our own experience that Magnier is a fine re-
porter who has been a journalist for nearly four decades. In addition to the Kalamazoo Gazette, he has held various positions in Wash-
ington, D.C. and currently is managing editor at National Journal.

A native of South Bend, Indiana, and a graduate of Georgetown University, Magnier lives with his family in Arlington, Virginia.

A continuing dialogue with the Au Sable River

(Continued from Page 3)

What I’m saying is that Michigan envi-
ronmental groups simply let Enbridge make the decisions about how the Au Sable River

...so sorry. ... Will you still be my friend?

We always forgive our friends, but there’s a limit, and I’m afraid that’s reached.

A balmy breeze blew and I could almost hear the words, “I’m so sorry... Will you still be my friend?”

But the Au Sable seemed to know of our sadness. Soon there-
after, it put on a show, with a daz-
zel of life that sent us back across the water: “Fireworks for the fish,” as my nephew used to say.

In considering this situation, Michigan environmental groups should not consider that Enbridge maintaining an operating pipeline with this manner of unsupported pipeline segment constitutes acceptable pipeline engineering design for either the current exist-
ing facility, or any replacement pipeline in this location. These two pipelines at the Straits with this design in this location can-
not be practically and effectively visually in-
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A drive into springtime

The trip was not planned. It started with a phone call from my brother. That was on Feb. 18 of this year. He was calling to see if I wanted to ride along with him to take our mother down to see her sister—our aunt—in Knoxville, Tennessee, for a four-day visit. I said yes. I mean YES! Please! I only had one question—could I bring my fly fishing "stuff" along? "Fine with me," was his reply.

Now I had purpose. Of course, I also looked forward to seeing my aunt and spending some quality time with my mother.

We woke up early the next morning. It was around 7 a.m. I drove this trip to Tennessee many times, though not with Knoxville as a destination. And not in February.

The drive was pleasant and, thankfully, uneventful. My brother, who has made the trip in February many times, commented that he had never seen snow cover all the way through Indiana. Even the northern tier of Kentucky had patches of snow here and there.

As we drove on, the snow waned and disappeared altogether by the time we got into Tennessee. Even the tops of the Smokies did not appear to have snow and this was unusual. I have seen the mountain peaks closed the first of April, with the Forsythia blooming in Gatlinburg and the tops of the mountains covered in snow. As we arrived in Knoxville, the thermometer read 50 degrees. When we stepped out of the car at my aunt’s house, it was like a dream.

That morning after breakfast and a shower, we decided we would probably let mom and her sister get caught up and not interfere with that sacred reunion.

Oh, and maybe we should go to the mountains to give them plenty of time. Because seemingly unsinkable act could be by sheer coinci-
dence lead to some random sightseeing and possibly trout fishing—
mainly as a means of preoccupation, of course, so as not to lead us back to the house prematurely and possibly foul the atmosphere of two sis-
ters in deep conversations and “catching up.” I felt that was the re-
 sponsibility of considerate sons and nephews.

As we drove higher into the Smokies, the thermometer seemed to climb along with us. By 1 p.m. It was 65 degrees. We had been above-
down and, as well, was fitting, the radio dialed into bluegrass music. The sky was a deep blue with nary a cloud to be seen. The snow shoveln-
blisterers on my hands seemed to heal as they hung out the window, as if they were immersed in some traditional southern backwoods potion.

After a little bit of trout fishing and sightseeing, we decided to head back to Knoxville. It was late afternoon and food was the next order of business.

I have a hope that our considerate and unsinkable act would not go unnoticed. Possibly we would be rewarded with a home-cooked meal that would be ready to be dished out upon our arrival. This was not exactly how dinner played out, but it was in the making and served a short time later.

The next two days seemed to go exactly as the same—the first—up early, coffee, a bite to eat and we were off. It appeared as if the two sis-
ters were in fact the depths of bonding, and it seemed only fair that we not interfere with the siblings catching up on all things family and otherwise.

So, for three full days, my brother and I dutifully stayed away. We went to the mountains, to the rivers and streams and had awesome weather—all in the name of what was decent and righteous, as good sons and nephews with a sense of “doing the right thing for others,” should do.

Early on Sunday morning, we departed for home. Leaving this virtual tropical paradise and driving back to the sub-ar-
ctic regions of southern Michigan—with its normal daily routines like snow shoveling hauling firewood and repeatedly checking the ten-
day forecast, which has been randomly similar to the results of a scratch-off ticket.

We drove into snow midway into Kentucky and, well, you live in Michigan, you know the rest of the story.

After being home for a few days and staring at the largest piles of snow that have ever adorned my yard, I have to really think hard to re-
member seeing snow at this time of year. Now it seems like a dream.

Now when I check the ten-day forecast, it is for Tennessee. Then, as I watch the snow fall outside my window for a moment, I remember it was real.

The NORTH WOODS CALL urges public trust framework

The Traverse City-based For Love of (FLOW) public policy group says the International Joint Commission (IJC) is on tar-
get including public trust stan-
dards in its recommendations for solving Lake Erie’s harmful algae bloom.

"The call for a public trust framework recognizes a benchmark adopted by the courts of all eight Great Lakes states and On-
tario," said FLOW founder Jim Olson. "The benchmark means governments must act. It also means that all private interests in-
vested with phosphorus manage-
ment practices, farming and the non-profit sector must work to-
gether, because we share this com-
mon water held in public trust." Citizens may also "seek re-
course" to make sure public and private uses are protected, he said.

Much of the Straits of Mackinac could be harmed if Enbridge’s pipeline were to rupture and spill into the water, authorities warn as the Snow City photo show.


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A dedicated pipeline bridge for Line 5 as a specific dedicated structure would be a major and expensive (option), with considerable visual impact on the Straits. Such a structure would require construction of tall bridge piers in the Straits. However, another alternative is to re-route Line 5 through the Mackinac Bridge and make it into a major campaign issue in the coming [gubernatorial] and U.S. Senate races. Getting the Enbridge company under some kind of decent system of accounta-

The State of Michigan should extract a significant price from Enbridge if the Mackinac Bridge were to

There are many rites and signs of spring

When I began working at Sareet Nature Center in 1977, we had a "phenology season." We kept track of the first arrival of certain spring fauna and flora. We also produced a list of ar-
vival and departures based on years studying the birds that came through our area.

Now many robins remain here all winter, as do Eastern Bluebirds, so they are not as good an indicator. The same is true for the Canada Goose. With the introduction of the "giant" Canada Goose, we no longer have an easy way to distin-
guish between northern flocks moving through, or just resident flocks moving about.

One bird that is great to keep an eye on is Dendroica cerulea, which was a sign of spring, but now—at least in some of the southern counties—some cranes remain here all winter. A better judge of the coming of spring is the arrival of Common Grackles and Red-winged Blackbirds (al-
though a few of those, too, remain year-round).

I usually don’t count the Red-
winged Blackbirds as arriving until I hear the first “konk-ah-ree-
ah” of the males. Males typically arrive about a month earlier than the females to set up territories.

One bird that is great to keep an eye and ear out for is the Ameri-
can Woodcock. Very rarely will one overwinter in the north. Ar-
ning back in Michigan, begin-
inning in March through April, the males are active up in the ter-
itories for the wooing of females. Usually the ground needs to be somewhat thawed and most of the snow cover gone. The males will set up their peenting area in a semi-open space and begin their peenting dance and aerial flight at dusk and dawn during early spring, then off and on all night as the females return a month or so later. If you have not encoun-
ted this ritual, go to YouTube, and call up "music of nature" and the American Woodcock. You will see and hear the male doing his thing before the aerial display.

In fact, at our nature center, many friendly wingers were given on who would be the first to locate a woodcock. I have won many a cheeseburger this way.

Of course, as spring advances, we look forward to the first Balti-
more Oriole, House Wren, Ruby-
throated Hummingbird and Purple Martin. Most often, these birds arrive in the same short and fairly predictable window of time. In some cases, we can keep track of when they move northward. In the case of the Purple Martin, you can go to the Purple Martin Con-
servation Society website and watch the map as they are sighted moving north. For the Ruby-
throated Hummingbird, you can visit hummingbirds.net/map.html and get updates on migration.

As we move from late April to May, things get real crazy with multitudes of bird migration through and it can test your iden-
tification skills.

Another sign of spring is the leav-
ing of the ice on ponds and lakes. This allows the critters to begin to sit up as the water warms. The DNR and local nature centers often do frog and toad surveys to keep tabs on the populations. It is fun to know which begins calling first and how to tell them apart by their calls. One of the first is the wood frog, which is usually found in wooded ponds and begins to call even when there may be some ice floating on the pond. The call is a soft quick “bark.” Soon will come the sounds of the chorus of frogs and cricket frogs, followed by the spring peepers.

When it gets real warm and we have seen a small trout stream flowing through the farm. We might experience a migration of frogs, toads and salamanders moving to ponds in the warm rain.

The arrival of vegetation is more dependent on the soil warm-
ing up, but the skunk cabbage doesn’t want. It has a mechanism to warm the soil around it and often we see it coming up through the snow. It is believed that the skunk cabbage flower emerges, and takes advantage of the beetles and flies that are feeding on winter kill car-riag, because few bees or but-
terflies are out this time of year.

The parade of arriving bloom-
ing spring wildflowers can vary as much as three weeks over differ-
ent years.

I was lucky when growing up, as we had a small Trout stream flowing through the farm. We couldn’t wait for the first warm April day to wander down and do some exploring. We usually “baptized” the creek on April 1, by throwing pebbles into the cool, clear water.

One of the other rites of spring for my brother and I was to go fishing with my uncle for suckers in the St. Joseph River between Berrien Springs and St. Joseph. If we caught extra fish, we could sell them at the fish shop. But, as the dip netters started fishing, the price dropped dramatically. Yet, the dip-netters were fun to watch in their shoddy shacks below the dam in Berrien Springs.

(Continued from Page 5)
**Conservation Officer Logs (2/14 through 2/17/14)**

**DISTRICT 1 (Marquette)**

CO Dave Painter responded to the scene of a snowmobile crash in Iron County. The snowmobile operator was travelling at a high speed and lost control, causing him to hit a tree. The rider suffered leg fractures and was transported from the scene to a hospital by National Guard medevac pilots. CO Painter and a local deputy responded to the scene. The operator was not injured but was lodged in the county jail.

**DISTRICT 2 (Newberry)**

CO Mike Hammill received a report of a small dog frozen in the snow on the edge of a snowmobile trail in a remote area north of Newberry. Two deputies responded to the area on his snowmobile and located the dog as described. The small dog was discharged by the owner, it was a white in color, sitting in the deep snow and covered by snow in subzero temperatures at the time. The dog died of hypothermia, CS Speigl put it inside his snowmobile jacket and returned to town to the local veterinarian. He later learned that the animal had been released as lost by its owners when it jumped out of their car. The snowmobile was located and a full recovery was returned to its very happy owners.

**DISTRICT 3 (Gaylord)**

CO Steve Speigl responded to a Report-All-Poaching (RAP) complaint of a snowmobiler southeast of Gaylord setting too many tip ups and leaving them unattended. A search on the ice revealed a total of 10 tip ups set in front of a lake-side cabin. One of the tip ups had a ‘flag up’ and after an hour CO Speigl contacted the angler who had been awakened. The angler owned the tip ups and said he didn’t think he was ‘slashing’ the ice, he was just catching fish anyway. CO Speigl advised the importance of keeping lines in intermediate control, and then issued a notice to the area he was in, CO MacNeill was able to give the angler the direction back to the vehicle.

**DISTRICT 4 (Cadillac)**

Around 10 p.m. CO Steve Converse was traveling home when he observed sparks flying over the Manistee River/M-115 bridge. The observation was intentionally caused by sparks being released from the engine of the snowmobile causing sparks to escape and jump across the traffic lane on Douglas Bridge. The operator was an individual wearing a helmet, had no functional headlight or taillights on the snowmobile, had not registered the snowmobile, and did not have a trail permit. Enforcement action was taken.

CO Kevin Postma was checking ice anglers when he contacted a boater on the 61st Street Bridge. The subject was fishing and admitted to having a small bag of marijuana. The bag of marijuana was seized from the vehicle, and the vehicle was towed. A warrant is being sought for the operator of the vehicle as well as the subject.

**DISTRICT 5 (Roscommon)**

COs Matt Lienleutz and Mike Hears worked an investigation of illegal trapping activities. The investigation involved several family members, led them to numerousotters, one of which was not tagged. Enforcement action was taken on the untaggedotters, as well as additional warnings for other issues. Reponding to ongoing trespass complaints from the rail company, CO John Huspen worked a high priority area near Frederick. The compacted snow from the nearby railroad had covered the snowmobile, had not registered, and was ticketed for no registrations or other offenses. The recovered rifle diffused the situation.

**DISTRICT 6 (Bay City)**

CO Phil Hudson responded to a snowmobile personal injury crash where the operator had struck a tree head on. CO Hudson rendered first aid and covered the victim with his emergency blanket and snowmobile uniform coat to keep them warm until fire rescue arrived on scene with a back board and basket to transport the victim.

**DISTRICT 7 (Plainwell)**

CO Dave Rodgers was called to a report of coyote hunters with dogs trespassing in Kent County. CO Rodgers met with deputies at the scene, who were holding some of the hunters and beginning their investigation. Hunters on the road hadusted their dog with a rock, then had the dog run and pass the Conklin, Sparta and Kent City Conservation Officers. The COs worked an investigation with WCOs Cary Foster and Ivan Perez. The COs will be ticketed for operating in a closed area. The pair could smell marijuana as they approached the vehicle. The driver admitted to having some marijuana. The bag of marijuana was located and the driver was ticketed and posted in the patrol vehicle for a consent search of the vehicle.

**DISTRICT 8 (Rose Lake)**

CO Kyle Bailey checked a pair of anglers on the Chippewa River. The angler said he hadn’t caught any fish, but when the CO asked about the bag of marijuana in the vehicle he said, “I don’t have a fish in there.” The bag contained a large perch and a 13-inch largemouth bass. The subject was ticketed for taking a bass out of season.

CO Jason Smith followed up on a deer complaint where a snowmobiler was operating without the operating the vehicle during the day. He followed the subject, who was less than truthful, and when CO Smith asked him about the pictures on Facebook, the hunter then remembered that he went out and shot a buck opening morning and purchased a license that night. Enforcement action was taken.

**DISTRICT 9 (Southfield)**

According to an anonymous tip, a snowmobiler was operating in a closed area. The pair could smell marijuana as they approached the vehicle. The driver admitted to having some marijuana. The bag of marijuana was located and the driver was ticketed and posted in the patrol vehicle for a consent search of the vehicle. A small bottle of black rum was found in the glove box. The driver admitted he purchased the firearm from “an acquaintance of mine who received a conviction for a gun to illegal narcotics. CO Rodgers followed tracks approximately one-half mile, which began to indicate a running stride. Enroute to the area where the victim was found in the snow near a tree during the track. After a mile of tracking, he found the hunter standing on the next road across a section with the excuse of just waiting for his dog. The recovered rifle diffused the situation and he was ticketed for trespassing.

COs Cary Foster, Dave Rodgers and Ivan Perez continued to work snowmobiling violations near the Conklin, Sparta and Kent City area, and also patrolled the Muske- etaw Trail. During the patrol, four people were ticketed for operating unregistered snowmobiles and two people for failing to wear a helmet. One fisherman was ticketed for not keeping a log book. The person was ticketed for fishing without a license and posted pictures of himself on Facebook. The person was ticketed for taking a bass out of season.

CO Ivan Perez reports that a subject he arrested last year for shooting a pheasant from a motor vehicle was found guilty by the district court, and he had his hunting and fishing licenses revoked for a year.

**Contact Information**

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March 2014 Page 7

**THE NORTH WOODS CALL**
Outdoor Education + Exercise
This past winter may have been a tough one for adults grasping snow shovels, but for children outfitted with snowshoes, it represented new learning and exercising opportunities. Just ask these fifth-graders from Charlevoix, who explored the great white wilderness with staff from the Little Traverse Conservancy.

The enthusiastic group of kids gathered recently in Charlevoix County at the Barry “Nathan” Driggers Pre-School.

Photo courtesy of Little Traverse Conservancy

Fishery conversation & coffee
The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will host informal public discussions of local and statewide fisheries management activities and concerns. “Conversations & Coffee with DNR Fisheries Division” will take place in each of the eight management units that oversee the state’s fisheries, and will give people the opportunity to meet managers and biologists, discuss local issues and management activities, and get specific questions answered.

Refreshments will be served. The meetings will be as follows:

Tuesday, March 18, from 7 to 8 p.m. at the Bay City State Recreation Area Visitor Center, 3582 State Park Drive, in Bay City.

Wednesday, March 19, from 6 to 7:30 p.m. at the Carl T. Johnson Hunt and Fish Center, 6087 E. M-115, in Cadillac.

Thursday, March 20, from 7 to 8 p.m. at the Watervfod Fish Station, 7806 Gale Road, in Watervord.

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Bill would alter beaver trapping requirements
Proposed legislation in the Michigan Senate would allow licensed fur dealers to trap beavers—a move that would reportedly open the door to commercial trapping of the animal. The bill, introduced by Sen. Tom Casperson (R-Escanaba)—who also championed Michigan’s wolf hunt law—has been reviewed by the Senate Outdoor Recreation & Tourism Committee and was reported in the legislative body earlier this month.

Although beavers can be trapped now, such action by licensed fur dealers has been outlawed since the early 1900s. The current law was created at a time when the beaver population needed to be increased and the intent was to make it harder for beavers to be harvested, according to Michigan Department of Natural Resources officials.

It is a law that some say is no longer needed.

Some animal rights activists, however, say that trapping more beavers would be “senseless and cruel.” But supporters of the plan say beavers can be a nuisance to humans and it’s helpful—for people and beavers—to keep the ecosystem from getting overpopulated.