

FEBRUARY 2010 NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION (NRC) MEETING

Some of you might have participated in the collection of fish stomachs from Lake Huron. These stomachs were used in a study to determine the forage base of the lake. The preliminary results indicate predator fish have found new food sources. This is good news for salmon anglers as well as the lake in general. The results were so promising that the study will be continued. Please watch for requests for stomachs. The folks doing the study were overwhelmed by the response and cooperation they received.

The department is continuing the classification of streams in Michigan. This assessment determines temperature, flow, habitat, and fish presence. It considers the topographical nature of the watershed and the absorption capability of the soils. The resulting information is critical in making decisions about water withdrawal, stocking and water quality.

The Feds have decided to get out of the falconry business and turn over regulating to the states. The DNRE is reviewing the state regulations and will be assuming this responsibility shortly.

The bear harvest results are in. In the U.P. the desired harvest was 1,734 with 1,593 taken. This is down a couple hundred from last year. In the Lower the desired harvest was 323 with 433 taken which was also down about a hundred from last year. The tribal allotment was about 205 but they only harvested 32. The analysis indicated little change from last year. Interestingly, a questionnaire indicated a very high (85% to 90%) acceptance of the presence of bears in northeast Michigan.

The U.P. deer population study indicates a definite drop in the deer population with an increase in the bear, wolf and coyote population. This, of course, is a complaint the U.P. folks have had for some time. The same complaint we have about coyotes. The study included trapping and collaring adult deer as well as fawns and predators. Of the 48 fawns that were collared 27 were killed. 8 by coyotes, 6 by bobcats, 2 by bear, 1 by an eagle, 2 by

cars and 8 by other means or unknown. Interestingly, none were killed by wolves. This study will be continuing in various parts of the U.P. Partially as a result of this study, the DNRE will take another look at opening coyote hunting during the firearm deer season in the U.P.

Chronic Wasting Disease was discussed with the studies still ongoing. Don't look for the ban on feeding and baiting to be lifted.

House Bill 5734 initiated by Rep. Stamas and supported by Reps. Bolger, Brown, Horn, Ball, Moore, Slezak and Hildenbrand offers an auction of five bear and five elk licenses each year. Although this might bring in additional funds to the DNRE it is not considered to be in the best interests of the hunting community or the resource. I personally do not consider our wildlife a commodity to be sold to the highest bidder. The current process is equitable and fair for the citizens of Michigan. This bill may be well meaning but is a perfect example of the lack of understanding of resource management and hunting ethics in our legislature.

A large portion of the Committee of the Whole meeting was spent on the consolidation. The Director discussed the current organization chart. So far there has been no change in the appointees for wildlife, fisheries, recreation, forestry and resource management. The Director went down a list of items explaining which fall under the NRC's jurisdiction and which do not. There were a number of items which the NRC has lost and a number of joint items. Mackinac Island and the historical archives, which were just added, have been removed from the NRC's responsibilities. It will be interesting to see how all this washes out. The Commissioners seemed more at ease than last month. I guess that comes from finding out where you stand even if there are holes in the floor.

The Pure Michigan Hunt winners were announced. There were three, the first of which was a 14 year old who put in one application. Better luck next year.

Public appearances, although there were only a few, were interesting. As a lead in, the Ionia recreation area site usage was discussed earlier in the meeting. It has some 40+ equestrian camp sites which are filled five times per year while regular campers are being turned away because of a shortage of non-equestrian sites. This, of course, has financial implications to the DNRE. It was suggested that the equestrian sites be reduced with consideration to accommodate the heavy usage occurrences. This was sent back for further communication with the equestrian community. The equestrians were represented, at the public appearance portion, by an individual requesting more horse trails and camp sights. This representative didn't care about the financial implications of turning away regular campers and wanted the equestrian sites to remain open just in case. I see this so often where there is no give even if something isn't being used and there is no loss to the complainant.

A group from the U.P. discussed the supplemental deer feeding plan. The main concern was: What triggers the need to feed deer and, therefore, the granting of a permit? These triggers were identified as; the winter severity index, the condition of the habitat, deer density and predator population. The group is working with the DNRE to do everything possible to increase the deer population in the U.P. Of course, there was some discussion about wolves but even more about coyotes.

Over the past three months there has been discussion about nuisance geese and the removal process. The DNRE has set fees for both the land owner and the businesses doing the removal. This effort was very extensive and involved a number of goose removal companies. An individual showed up to complain that he had not been notified of the discussion, even though he often visited the DNRE web site. He complained that the fees were too large and he was going out of business and it was the DNRE's fault. The Governor is working to help small businesses and the DNRE is trying to destroy them . . . etc., etc., etc. I think the Commissioners handled this quite well. I don't think they have

a new friend, but it was kept much more amicable than I would have had it. I would think that if my business depended on decisions made by any governmental body, I would be in touch with that body constantly. I would also think that attacking that body would not be in my best interest. And, although this was not pointed out, it is not the NRC's responsibility to assure economic growth in Michigan, although they often do, but to protect the natural resources for the use of all the citizens of the state. I hear the economic complaint quite often and it is without regard to the impact on the natural resources. The mine, mine, mine mind set. I'm sorry, but those folks will get no sympathy here.

Jim De Clerck