

NOVEMBER, 2010 NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION (NRC) MEETING

As you have heard by now, Becky Humphries is leaving the position of DNRE Director for a position with Ducks Unlimited. Of the few directors I have known, Becky was the best. She is extremely knowledgeable of all the activities of the DNRE and most willing to discuss issues with anyone. I will miss the close working relationship we had and only hope I can have a similar working relationship with her replacement. Becky, we wish you the best in your new position and know that you are always welcome at the Saginaw Field and Stream Club.

I finally got to my review of the 2010/11 budget. A year-to-year comparison is almost impossible because this is the first year of a consolidated budget. However, I am able to point out some areas of concern. Year-to-year there was a \$2 million decrease in wildlife funding with a little over 10% of that contributed to by the General Fund. Fisheries dropped by about \$1.5 million. Law enforcement stayed about the same, but that included the addition of the old DEQ responsibilities. It is a monumental task just to keep track of spending let alone assuring that all funds are spent as legislated. I'll let the auditors take care of that, but I'll give you an idea of the magnitude. There are, by my count, some 104 funds providing money to the DNRE. Many of these funds have multiple sources of revenue and the various sources provide funding to multiple funds. Every check received must be disbursed, as legislated, amongst the various funds. Every check written must be applied to whatever fund supports the effort applicable to the expenditure. Every payroll check has to be distributed to the various funds as described on each individual's time log. I don't know what the cost of all this effort is, but there has to be a better way.

The Antler Point Restriction Work Group met to continue our deliberations on the merits of the current system and to start compiling recommendations. When the recommendations are finalized, I will present them and some insight as to the logic.

There has been a lot of smoke over the gear restrictions applicable to less than 200 miles of the 20,000 miles of trout streams in Michigan. Of the 687 responses received so far, 39 oppose the new rules. Unfortunately they are a very loud 39. If you fish Lake Erie, the allotted harvest for Michigan license holders will be reduced because of the reduced number of fish available.

There was an update on the commercial hunting guide issue. The rules and requirements are washing out to be similar to the current commercial fishing guide regulations. I am continuing to push toward a resource use study which would define the uses, regulations and fees applicable to both individual and commercial use of Michigan's natural resources.

North American bats are at risk to a disease known as White Nose Syndrome. This disease has been in Europe, but the bats there have developed immunity to it. There is a 99% chance that the little brown bat could be extinct in 16 years. Bats prey on night flying insects and account for the elimination of thousands of these insects every night. Efforts are under way to correct the situation, but it does not look very encouraging.

One of the ways Bovine TB is spread is through deer feeding on hay bales stored in open fields. There is effort to have the farmers store these hay bales in hoop barns. These look like Quonset huts made out of metal and plastic. Quite a few of the farmers in the TB area are going to this type of storage. The problem is that these farmers operate on limited resources and

the hoop barns don't come cheap. Efforts to get some relief through government funding have yet to be fruitful.

The NRA is updating it's Generally Accepted Operating Practices for shooting ranges. So far there is nothing significant that would affect us. We will be reviewing our ranges when the update, expected next year, is complete.

The Swine Work Group has made its recommendations related to containment, biosecurity, inventory, liability for escaped animals, indemnity, fees to support the regulations and penalties for violation. It would appear these businesses are going to exist and operate. Our concern is in the areas of cost to regulate and penalties for violations. The work group recommended that fees be set at a level to cover all the regulatory costs, thus not penalizing any governmental department. We strongly agree with this. The misdemeanor penalties include: \$1,000 for fencing non-compliance, records violations and a non-licensed shooting facility customer; \$1,000 per animal for escaped animals and unreported escaped animals. The felony penalties include \$10,000 for intentional release, unregistered facility, intentional capture and release into a facility, intentional sale to an unlicensed dealer, sale by an unlicensed seller and releasing "slaughter only" swine into a hunting facility or the wild. We also strongly agree with these. The problem is getting the judiciary to enforce the findings of the regulators. There is another problem as related to the cervid regulatory program. 93% of the cost to regulate is covered by state agencies with the balance by the industry. We suspect a similar condition will exist with the swine program after the legislators have their way. Legislators do not consider our resources as having economic value, therefore, defined economic impact, regardless of how small, will beat sound resource management every time.

There were about 25 public appearance comments. It was split 50/50 with those speaking on the trout regulations. All of those speaking on the feral swine issue wanted them declared an invasive species.

Announcements on the appointments to the Regional Deer Advisory Team and the Citizens Advisory Councils are expected next month.

Jim De Clerck