

MARCH, 2010 NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION (NRC) MEETING

The Technology, Information, Marketing & Education Committee reviewed their 2010 priorities. The concentration will continue to be on recruitment and retention with a focus on under-represented groups such as; women, college students and non-rural kids. The plan includes partnering with schools, clubs, businesses, etc. on existing programs. In conjunction with this effort, I attended a meeting at the Bay City State Recreation Area and offered our facilities and training capabilities to these programs. Our offer was met favorably. This follows our Club's efforts to diversify our member base and expand our service to the community.

The Wildlife and Fisheries Committee reviewed the status of Bovine TB. The trend in positive test results has reversed in the past few years and steps need to be taken to bring this back under control. Some reasons for the condition surround cattle feeding practices, baiting and the lack of access for hunters. As a result the antlerless quotas in the TB area will be increased this year. The real reason for the situation is the lack of concern on the part of residents in the club country area. Like other areas in the state, deer are a commodity and, therefore, a revenue source. Success is measured in the harvest – a quick and easy harvest requiring baiting. It is not deer hunting, it is deer luring. It is not fair chase, it is a rigged ambush. Now I am not opposed to ambushing deer, I do it, it comes with age, but I don't rig the ambush. I scout the area and find where the deer are moving and set up accordingly. My gripe is; we have been told that gathering deer in a small area spreads disease, TB and CWD. If we want a healthy deer herd we should avoid confining deer in a small area. We can't do much about the natural instinct of deer to yard up in the winter, but we can avoid contributing to unnatural

concentrations. It continues to disappoint me to see people requesting the reestablishment of baiting during the public appearance portion of the meeting. If you follow the money you will find that it is not the hunter or the deer that benefit from baiting, but it is the hunter who pays for it and it may be that the deer herd will pay an even greater price.

The January elk survey indicated approximately 780 animals which is slightly under the goal of between 800 and 900. This year's recommendation is to reduce the harvest and further distribute the hunting opportunities. It looks like there will be 230 permits issued with an additional 50 in the late season, if necessary. An elk management plan is under way and is expected to be finalized this coming winter.

Bear quotas were reviewed and it seems that nobody is happy with the plan. One thing is that the treaty area is combined with non-treaty areas therefore giving the tribes additional harvest allotments, or so it appears. Further, going back to the club country again, there seems to be an abundance of bears in an area to which hunters do not have access – all private land. The bear management units should be broken up in a manner that keeps the treaty areas separate from the non-treaty areas and should isolate areas where special conditions warrant special attention – either too many or too few bears. I based my opinion on the presentations made and the discussions which took place. But I am neither a biologist nor a bear hunter. So what do I know? I just thought what I heard and saw was accurate. Over-all there is little change in the quotas and goals from last year.

The Finance Committee met and things are not improving. As the consolidation progresses we will be watching closely how funds are disbursed between resource management and environment regulation.

The Committee of the Whole reviewed some of the current legislative activity. There is a moose hunt proposal that would allow the taking of at least one moose per year. There are number of bills directed at the feral pig problem. As usual, none address the problem of who is causing the pig problem. The park funding bill is progressing very slowly.

The public appearance portion included a request to reinstate baiting (previously commented on). The U.P. Sportsmen's Alliance talked about the winter deer feeding program and the revisions to the regulations applicable to that program. I didn't know that one of the triggers that allow feeding was that there had to be four feet of staying snow. That seemed like a lot to me. Winter deer feeding may seem contrary to my previous comments but, in this case, the deer are yarded up and the feeding is spread over an extensive area. I don't know how anybody can stand by and watch animals starve.

The Michigan Horse Council continues their efforts to expand access to the areas where horses and pack animals can be used. My guts tell me this is a disaster waiting to happen. Mixing cross country skiing, hiking, snowmobiles, ORV's, mountain bikes and motocross with horses and pack animals is begging for a problem. Of course, not all these trails will be mixed. New trails will be developed and what does that do to the wildlife? My hunting opportunities are already interfered with by these "other users" and I paid for the land on which they ply their sport. I would like to see all trail use discontinued, except by hunters who are hunting, during the hunting seasons. Further, since I cannot train my dogs during the nesting and birthing season, neither should trail use be allowed during that time. I'm not opposed to trails or trail use. It just seems that logic applied in one area goes by the wayside in another. This is another "follow the money" question. There are taxes on

hunting and fishing equipment that go back to managing the resource. No such tax exists for trail equipment. In some cases there isn't even a land use fee.

While I am on a rant, Greg King and I attended the meeting on Asian Carp at SVSU. It is absolutely mind boggling to me that a small number of people can block efforts to prevent a horrendous disaster. And our government (federal) bows to them. We have a \$50 million business threatening a \$50 billion industry. This is a no-brainer, not only environmentally but, even more so, economically. Are we electing leaders or followers?

The Michigan Bear Hunters, the U.P. Bear Houndsmen and the Hunting Dog Federation complained about the Lower Peninsula bear quota being too high. They say there are fewer bears in the lower than estimated by the DNRE. These are the same people who sued the DNRE a few years ago, about the bobcat population being less than estimated, in an attempt to limit bobcat trapping. They lost. The conflict was between trappers and those who hunt bobcat with dogs. The argument given this day had shades of a similar conflict between bear hunters who use bait (and take most of the bears) and those who hunt with dogs. I hear complaints about bear hunters who use dogs quite often. They range from trespassing to preventing trail users from using trails and even blocking roads. This was the cause of Proposal "D" a few years back when the hunting community had to come to the rescue of bear hunting with dogs. A very small number of people are creating an unfavorable image of hunting. Some people just never learn or maybe they just don't care.

Jim De Clerck