

JUNE, 2010 NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION (NRC) MEETING

The Committee on Technology, Information, Marketing and Education met first with a presentation on the National Wild Turkey Foundation (NWTf) Jakes Program. There is a Jakes program for ages twelve and under and an Extreme Jakes Program for thirteen to seventeen year olds. There are over 1,000 events held each year in the US and Canada. You can get more info at WWW.nwtf.org. The DNRE, like our club, is expending a lot of effort to get youngsters involved in the outdoors. Anytime you get the chance to take a kid hunting, fishing, camping or just walking in the woods, don't pass it up.

The Wildlife and Fisheries meeting started with a review of the Lake Erie walleye quota system. Michigan is allowed 6% of the harvest, Ohio 51% with the rest going to Canada. Although the 2003 year class spawned five times the average number of young, the following years have been extremely low with only 2007 nearing the average. This caused the Michigan allotment to drop to 66,000. Good reason to fish Saginaw Bay.

The 2009 deer season results were presented. The number of people hunting dropped slightly from 2008 but was up from 2007, about a 1% change year to year. The Northern Lower had the most change. The 2009 harvest was under the 2008 harvest by about 44,000 (9%) which was under the 2007 harvest by about 3,000. That's almost a drop of 50,000 in two years. The reduction was mainly in antlered bucks. The archery seasons were up about 10% while the firearm season was down by about 20%. 2009 License sales were comparable to 2008 at about 1.6 million. Since the firearm opener in 2010 is on a Monday, I would expect fewer hunters to be afield and fewer deer to be harvested.

Antlerless quotas for 2010 are down in the UP but considerably up in the Lower, particularly in the southern half and the TB area. The final decision on the quotas will occur at the July meeting. The antler restrictions for the TB area which were up for approval in June was postponed to July.

The public appearances were a bit different this month. One individual from the TB area flatly stated they (whoever that is besides the speaker) would not reduce the deer herd to the levels recommended by the DNRE because of economic reasons – deer mean dollars. Between this attitude and the fact that access to private land in the TB area is impossible, I doubt if we will ever be able to get the disease under control. There was opposition to the antler restrictions in the TB area. The Northern Lower antlerless quotas were questioned as being too high.

The director approved some additional trails for equine access which was not sufficient for the horse folks. A number of them commented in opposition to the plan. There were also favorable comments on the plan. This issue could out pace the deer issues.

There were three people from a family hunt club who had their access road closed by the DNRE. They agree with the closure but sought some relief from the permitting costs related to building a new road. They were informed that the NRC no longer had jurisdiction over such issues. The effects of the consolidation and the reassigning of responsibilities has caused a lot of confusion. These people traveled a long way and wasted their time. I expect to see more of this.

A number of people commented in opposition to the Kennecott mining operation. Two were Native Americans. The first of which complained about the ruining of their ancestral hunting and ceremonial lands. I'm not sure I believed his comments, what with all the treaty

restrictions and the fact that the tribes did not file suit when the Kennecott plan was first presented. The second of which was a young lady who made a few comments and then went into what I would have to call a song but closer resembled a death chant wail frequently heard in the movies. I think it brought a tear to the eyes of everybody in the place. But, once again, the Commissioners could do nothing.

These meetings are long and sometimes tedious but never boring.

I attended the Conservation Coalition meeting at MUCC headquarters. This is a group of conservation minded organizations like DU, NWTF, TU, Pheasants Forever, Bear hunters, Houndsmen, etc. who meet to discuss opportunities to improve the management of our natural resources. The main issues discussed were funding and electing conservation minded officials. There will be some funding proposals coming forward. The Gubernatorial election was discussed and MUCC will be airing interviews with each candidate.

I also sit on the Lake Huron Citizens Advisory Committee. The last meeting had similar discussions as the Conservation Coalition. There is a different proposal on funding coming forward and a request for an all out effort to get the best candidates elected. In addition, there were five Sea Grant workshops held this spring. These one-day workshops were held at Port Huron, Ubyly, Tawas, Alpena and Cedarville. A number of potential plans were presented and commented on. The ones of interest to me were those on fish planting and hatcheries. I am a proponent of natural reproduction not perpetual planting. It seems I am not alone in that opinion. There were some forty odd questions to which the work group responded. The responses to a number of these reflected a trend toward natural reproduction, reestablishment of forage fish, not

stocking and spending the license monies in a more productive manner. There was also a comment that this was a different trend than five years ago. Lake Huron needs the restoration of forage fish before any game species can thrive. Even walleye, abundant as they are, will feel the effects of a lack of food. And, we cannot plant forever. The costs are excessive and the return is not commensurate. We need to spend more on habitat for those fish that can thrive and drop the fish that cannot be sustained naturally. Nature can provide the fish resources for free if we help. Free is good.

Jim De Clerck