

**JULY, 2010 NATURAL RESOURCES  
COMMISSION (NRC) MEETING**

The State Parks Advisory Committee held their meeting at the same time as the Bear Work Group meeting so I was not able to attend. However, let me once again encourage you to sign-up for the \$10.00 recreation passport fee when you renew your vehicle license. I know the park and boat launch users have recognized the value, but what about the non-users? How often have you driven past a state park or launch area and thought you might want to take a look but couldn't because you didn't have a permit? Maybe you wanted to fish, look around, take a walk or just satisfy your curiosity. \$10.00 solves those problems and helps maintain the parks. Maybe after one visit, you'll become a regular.

The Bear Work Group will spend their first few meetings going over information and gathering facts. This first meeting started with bear diseases and population. I thought the disease issue was quite interesting in that wild bear do not get diseases. That may not be entirely accurate in that given a specific set of circumstances, usually extreme, bear will contract and die from disease. Most of these have taken place under captive conditions with high density. Wild bear are not susceptible to disease because they have historically been, as opportunity presents, carrion eaters. If you look at the carrion eaters you will note that there is very little disease mortality, not that they are not carriers. Their immune systems have evolved to allow the use of available food without ill effects and thus have allowed healthy animals to persist. Humans started out that same way, persisted and evolved. Somewhere along the line we lost some of our immunity. Redeveloping that could go a long way to solving the health care and roadkill problems. Suffice to say, we have a healthy bear population.

The bear population study took place in the TB area. Hair samples were taken and analyzed so that each bear could be identified which avoids multiple counting. The good news was that the sample density matched the harvest density. That's not much considering the cost of the study. A cost which cannot be maintained even in a limited area study. The bottom line is we don't know how many bear we have in Michigan and the cost to find out is beyond available funding. I don't think this is unusual. Trying to count wildlife is not feasible. Effort needs to be spent on habitat and the impact of wildlife on the habitat. Couple that with (unfavorable) human encounters should give us an idea of density and, therefore, where to place the hunting pressure. The DNRE folks will tell you that's what they have been doing – as funding allows. The hunting community, however, want to know exactly how many of whatever there are in each area so they can have an easy harvest. The end result will be that the DNRE will spend a lot of money determining that you can't count wildlife on the scale hunters are demanding. Not to be too cynical of these studies, there will be some good information to come out, as there always is, but it probably won't penetrate very deep into the hunting community. Come on guys, most of us can't count the birds at the feeder so let's be realistic.

Wisconsin and Minnesota biologists will present their bear programs at the next meeting. Ya, What the hell do they know.

The Wildlife and Fisheries Committee reviewed the trout regulations, the deer harvest, the falconry regulations and the waterfowl regulations. Goose and mallard populations are up a fair amount. Not much else changed from my write-up last month. There will be a Antler Point Restriction Work Group to review the antler point restriction (Quality Deer Management) process and make recommendations.

**One thing did catch my ear but not much was said about it – there is going to be a pheasant restoration initiative. I am highly interested in this effort and I plan on having a lot of discussion with Russ Mason on the subject.**

**The public appearances included support for the falconry regulations and opposition to the baiting ban. Support for changing the crossbow regulations came mainly from crossbow groups and suppliers while the opposition came from archery groups. The big issue was the antler restrictions in the TB area for which there was overwhelming support. Ultimately the Commission passed a wildlife conservation order making the TB area antler restrictions the same as the UP restrictions.**

**Keith Charters, long-time Commissioner, long-time chair of the Commission and member of Saginaw Field & Stream Club chaired his last meeting. Keith has had a immeasurable positive influence on the management of Michigan's resources and he will be missed. We wish him good things in the future (as everyone there did with a standing ovation).**

**The Governor named Tim Nichols as the new chairman. I don't discount the ability of Mr. Nichols. He has shown a good knowledge of resource management and a willingness to work with the DNRE. I respect him very much. However, he is the least experienced Commissioner. He is, however, a Democrat as is the most experienced Commissioner. There are three Commissioners much more experienced than Mr. Nichols, however, two are Republicans and one is an independent. Keith Charters' replacement has also been named and he is also a Democrat. So, what am I getting at? MUCC was founded on keeping politics out of resource management. The activities of the last year would indicate politics is not creeping into the management of our resources, but leaping**

**and bounding into it. I don't care what your political affiliation is; political influence will corrupt the system and will not be in the best interest of the resources or the use of those resources.**

**Jim De Clerck**