

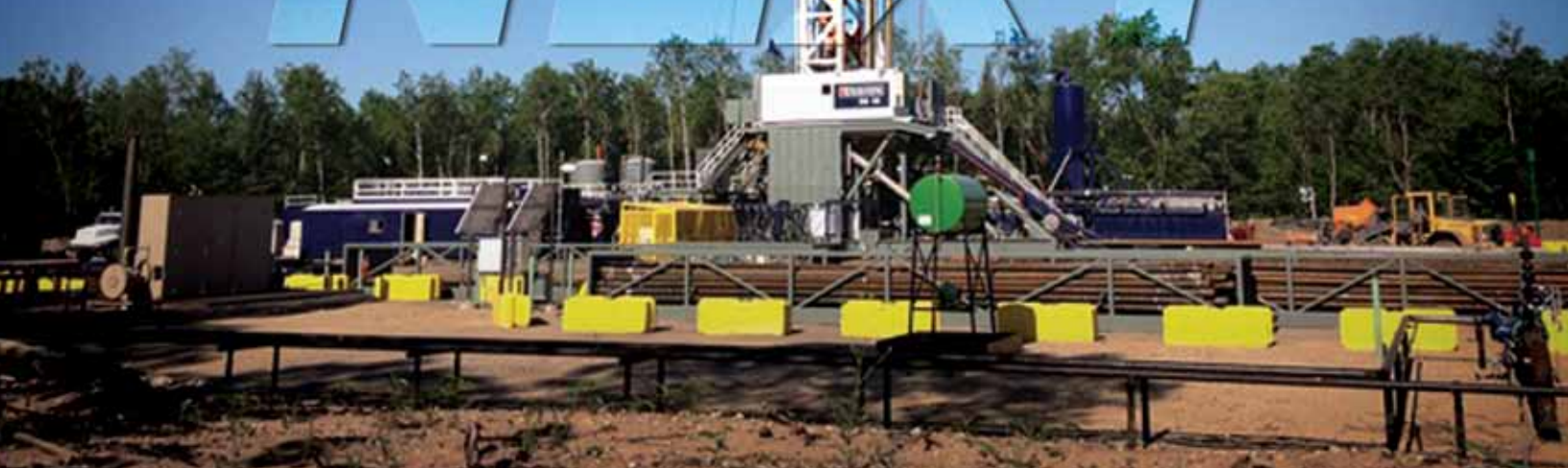
Winter 2014
Number 68

THE RIVERWATCH

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF
THE ANGLERS OF THE AU SABLE



WHAT'S NEXT



Tom Baird wraps up the Holy Water Mineral Lease action and charts the remaining steps to addressing our concerns regarding oil and gas development



BRINGING IT ALL BACK HOME ASBWPA TO MERGE WITH ANGLERS

It's time to join forces.

The Au Sable Big Water Preservation Association will merge with Anglers of the Au Sable. Both Boards are in agreement with the idea in principle, and final details of the merger are being worked out over this long, cold winter. As it stands now, the Mio-based organization will be officially absorbed at midnight September 8th. This will bring an end to the group's productive seven-year run as river keeper on the Trophy Water. The work that was initiated during their time will continue under the Anglers' direction.

It's the right move at the right time.

I founded this group in July 2007 for a couple of reasons. First, Anglers was involved in two crucial but time consuming lawsuits involving oil drilling on the Mason Tract and proper remediation of the Hayes 22 Central Processing Facility near Kolka Creek. There was little oxygen left to deal with the burgeoning problems on the Big Water. Second, while Anglers had done their best to help

out below Mio, their primary mission of caring for the Holy Water, North Branch and South Branch made the problems below the Dam secondary. There are, after all, so many hours in each day. The area needed help from a more localized organization. Lacking any such entity, I gathered several committed friends and took a hold of the reigns.

We did a lot in a short period with limited people-power by expanding cleanups on that heavily used and often abused section, conceptualizing the 70 Degree Pledge to address dangerous water temperatures in the summer months (later adding catch-n-release.org to educate folks on how to better treat the trout they let go so they might survive and grow to the trophy class), partnering with Huron Pines and the Forest Service to address erosion problems and improve access sites, fighting valiantly to secure fishing regulations that would further augment the survival of brown trout and, recently, kick-starting a process to introduce more Large Woody Debris in order to provide cover to a run of river that was large and wide but

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THE RIVERWATCH

The *RIVERWATCH* is a quarterly publication of The Anglers of the Au Sable, a non-profit corporation dedicated to the protection of the Au Sable River, its watershed and surrounding environs. Dues are \$25 per year. For membership please contact:

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MORE THAN A CHRISTMAS MIRACLE

*The Successful Outcome of the Holy Water Mineral Leasing Issue Was
a Product of Shrewd Planning, Coalition Building and a Sense of Urgency*

It was a tight clock, and there was a long way to pay dirt.

This football analogy best captures the circumstances Anglers faced last October as it became evident that the DNR was going to allow oil and gas companies to bid for leases on land interspersed throughout the heart of the Au Sable, its Holy Water. Worse, a third of those parcels were designated “development with restrictions,” which would allow the construction of production facilities and the installation of drilling rigs, storage tanks, compressors, and the other equipment necessary for oil or gas production. At first there was shock, then anger, but there wasn’t much time to dwell on either.

The task was daunting. Still, Anglers of the Au Sable, had done the impossible before. Folks who were at the Grayling Ramada in August of 2003 remember the forest of hands that were raised when somebody said, “Who here thinks that oil well is going in on the South Branch no matter what we do?” at a public meeting concerning that crisis. Then there was Kolka Creek -- not as dramatic as the Savoy case but maybe more important. The consensus was that Merit Energy would have a free hand in remediating the Hayes 22 facility.

In the end, we won, sometimes with the help of friends, sometimes on our own. Our record is not perfect, nobody’s is, but we know the rules of the game.

In the Holy Waters mineral leases fight, we twice asked DNR Director Creagh to remove the parcels from the October mineral rights auction. After our requests for reconsideration were denied our work was cut out.

First up was the gathering of personnel. We needed experts in communication, issue management, folks with knowledge and connections within the state government, especially the Department of Natural Resources, and, of course, attorneys. Several conference calls were held in short order to get the ball rolling.

We began a behind-the-scenes campaign, including communications from some of our well-placed members, to the DNR, Nature Resources Commission, DEQ, and Governor’s office. There were some weeks when the negotiations had the frenetic feel of a peace accord, but we stayed the course. It is important to remember that those folks involved were also working regular jobs, had fam-

ily obligations, and were dealing with the same holiday mishmash as everybody else. There were times for some when sleep came at a premium. But we received important signals from key governmental officials that our request was meeting with approval – if we could keep the pressure on.

Next up came building a coalition. Fortunately, the outrageous nature of the DNR’s plan – some likened it to opening the Pictured Rocks or Sleeping Bear Dunes to oil and gas development – aided us in our recruitment. We had partnered with many of the same organizations on sundry causes before. In a very short time Michigan Trout Unlimited (plus two local chapters), the Sierra Club, Michigan League of Conservation Voters, National Wildlife Federation, Michigan Environmental Council, and the Au Sable Big Water Preservation Association were all on board.

It was decided that we needed to go further than the “usual suspects” this time. We were grateful for their support, but everybody involved, including all of them, knew that the extra mile was necessary if we hoped to succeed.

To Keith,

Please help us save the fabled Au Sable

I live not in Michigan but it rings true for all waters

That the joy of holding a fish, seeing eagle or otter

Is worth more than gold and way more than dollars

The Holy Waters are a natural corridor

For those wild and free to inhabit and explore

Not the least of these is the fisherman, nor the greatest

But with a voice and a pen we are able

To urge, persuade, and convince you and the others

To protect and keep safe our beautiful mother

In this holy stretch of the fabled Au Sable

Sincerely,
Kyle Cartwright

Photo Credit: Gates Au Sable Lodge



Christmas Miracle continued...

An extensive outreach effort was made to bring in several “non-traditional” partners. It worked better than expected. The City of Grayling, Grayling Township, property owners associations, the Au Sable River Watershed Committee, FLOW, recreation and real estate businesses, and, the Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC) all joined us. MUCC is an extremely important voice regarding conservation questions in Michigan, and having them with us added tremendous weight to our push.

A letter to the DNR Director was carefully crafted. In the end 17 groups, businesses and governmental bodies signed on to it. The letter was sent on December 6, 2013, and copied to any and all in government likely to have a say in the leasing decision.

Many of these organizations took up the reigns on their own, but always staying on message in a carefully coordinated plan of attack. Email blasts to their memberships were forwarded to friends and so on. Almost everybody knew within a day of two of operatives hitting the “send”

button what the Holy Water lease issue was all about.

In the meantime, our Public Relations team put together maps, photos, articles and op-eds. We began planting stories with a selected group of reporters throughout the state including the *Detroit News*, *Free Press*, the *Associated Press*, and Michigan Public Radio. The Holy Water lease story was showing up everywhere. It put the oil and gas development issue on the agenda, and the whole thing started to resonate with the public.

And then it went viral. Citizens were now furthering what groups initiated. Perhaps the best example of this was from Robert Thompson, a member of Anglers who is a video producer in Chicago. Thompson was already working on a feature film concerning the Au Sable (watch for its release soon!) and had plenty of footage of the river. He created a 90 second collage of the Holy Water and superimposed the slogans from our “Save The Holy Waters Poster” while adding an affecting soundtrack. Now the cause had a polished, professional commercial (<http://>

vimeo.com/81287261) rolling through the cyberspace.

The tables had turned dramatically in roughly a fortnight. In the public sphere the pressure was mounting with every Internet refresh. People from discrete backgrounds, many of which who were not the typical responders to this sort of thing, were making their views known to the powers-that-be. Thousands of emails and letters were sent to Director Creagh. Behind the scenes in a highly disciplined dance of advocacy our well-placed members were making headway.

And in the end it worked. As outlined in *RIVERWATCH* 67 (“DNR Director Creagh Joins Anglers in Saying ‘No Surface Development’ on Holy Water”) the Director relented. He allowed the leases, but only as “non-development” in the Holy Waters corridor. This was our objective: preventing development of oil and gas wells near this special piece of water.

Of course, the devil is in the details. We are now working with the DNR on lease language that will prevent changes in the surface use designation during the life of the leases. In addition, Director Creagh assigned his Manager of Mineral Leases to design a way to identify “special places” like the Holy Waters in advance, and, if they are nominated for lease, make it clear they will be non-development. That’s not all there is left to do by a long shot, but we’ve come a long way since last October.

To say that this outcome was one of the most successful efforts in the 27-year history of Anglers would be self-serving, but not necessarily any less true. Given the short window of time and the nature of the government in this right-of-center, “drill, baby, drill” era, it seemed unlikely that we could affect a favorable outcome. But we did more than that. Now there is dialogue. The issue of oil and gas leasing and fracking is far from resolved in our state. The path forward is not clear.

We have a blueprint, though, recently tested and found to be effective. It involves smart and committed people from varied backgrounds hammering out consensus. It involves new partners, who for the first time are seeing the downside of oil and gas development when allowed to proceed in places that are special. We need to keep the pressure on, through a campaign involving diverse voices from the conservation community, environmental groups, business and local government. It cannot succeed without respectful discourse with the decision makers. And, finally, it can only truly be effective when it has the support of the people.

So, you see, it’s really not self-serving to say this may have been one of the Anglers’ Finest Hours. It came about due to a hell of a lot of people putting in a hell of a lot of effort, and doing it in double time.

Thank you all!

- Tom Baird, First Vice President

Director Creagh,

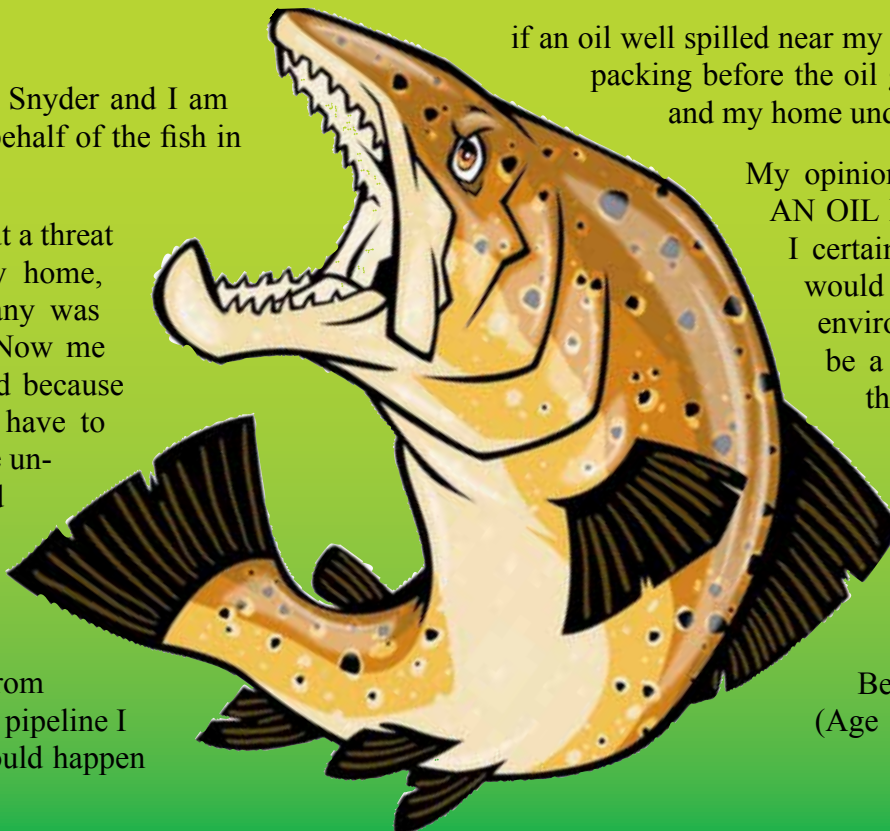
My name is Benjamin Snyder and I am writing this email on behalf of the fish in the Au Sable River:

I’ve just got news about a threat up the river from my home, the Encana oil company was building an oil well. Now me being a fish, I got mad because that would mean, I’d have to move my lovely House under the log. I once had a cousin that lived in the Kalamazoo River that died because an oil pipeline busted about a mile from his house. If that was a pipeline I can’t imagine what would happen

if an oil well spilled near my house. Well I better get packing before the oil gets spilled in the river and my home under the log is destroyed.

My opinion is DO NOT BUILD AN OIL RIG. The fish is right. I certainly think that an oilrig would pose a big threat to the environment and there would be a big risk of damage to the Au Sable River. I don’t want the same thing that happened to the Kalamazoo River to happen to us.

A Fish Friend,
Benjamin Snyder
(Age 11)



GAS AND OIL ON OUR RIVERS: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Director Creagh's decision about mineral leases on the Holy Waters was a welcome outcome, but it is just the first step in a long road to effectively addressing all oil and gas concerns

Rachel Carson, author of *The Silent Spring* and founder of the modern conservation movement, probably said it best, "Conservation is a cause that has no end. There is no point at which we say, 'Our work is finished.'"

No matter what the issue is, it almost always comes down to follow through on the details, and being prepared for the next challenge. For example, we are still working out the language regarding the Holy Water mineral leasing result. We will need to monitor the DNR and Encana Oil and Gas as they proceed in the area. And, we will need to work with the DNR and other interests to iron out the criteria for the definition of "special places" that will be exempt from surface development for oil and gas in the future.

With that in mind, here is our To Do List for constructing a set of regulations and results that should leave our wild places as safe as possible from potential damage due to hydrocarbon extraction:

- **MONITOR DEVELOPMENTS** – Given the lease of mineral rights to Encana near the Holy Waters, and in view of the other mineral rights leases in the watershed, we need to do a better job of keeping track of what's going on. This includes keeping an eye on mineral lease nominations and auctions on state land, identifying leases on private land, being aware of requests for land use changes (changes in surface use designations, roads and pipelines, etc), and spotting new drilling permits and requests for water withdrawals. Fortunately we have an Ace up our sleeve. Jacque Rose has been involved in moni-



Northern Michigan After Midnight - The green cloud is silica, part of the fracking cocktail. (Photo: www.respectmyplanet.org)

toring all of these items for several years. She and Paul Brady are the ones who first brought the fracking boom to our attention late in 2012, and they spotted the Holy Water leases last year. We will be utilizing Jacque's experience and skills in order to train additional volunteers in this effort. Given the dramatic increase in operations for the Manistee and Au Sable watersheds, we'll need the extra

help. This will be a great opportunity to do meaningful volunteer work for both of these wonderful rivers.

- **MSU BASELINE FLOW STUDY** – It now turns out that we initiated the "baseline" study just in the nick of time. The data gathered from these efforts gives us a significant leg up in our discussions with the entities involved in the regulatory processes. Having relevant data from documented collection activities gives us the "good science" needed to win crucial disagreements. It doesn't come cheaply; the DEQ won't do it, and the industry has not been required to do it, either. The annual cost of the program is significant. We expect to be doing this work for several more years. This means we need a concerted effort focused on raising funds for this necessary activity. That will likely involve reaching out to organizations as well as individuals.
- **DEQ FRACKING RULES and the WATER WITHDRAWAL ASSESSMENT TOOL (WWAT)** – The DEQ is about to release a set of proposed rules for fracking. They hope to be done by September – just

in time for the election. We have no idea exactly what they will submit, although we should have that soon enough (watch our website www.ausableanglers.org). We all need to participate in the comment phase, and Anglers will need to be a leading voice.

- **WATER USE ADVISORY COUNCIL (WUAC, or “the Water Council”)** – When the Water Council was reinitiated last year, it sparked great hope by many conservationists. We need to help it do its job, including improvements in the Water Withdrawal Assessment Tool (WWAT), and recommending site-specific reviews for water withdrawals for fracking. Some old hands in the conservation movement hope the Water Council may be able to pierce through some of the established rhetoric of those opposed to progressive water management.
- **GRAHAM INSTITUTE** – The Graham Institute for Sustainability Studies is studying various aspects of fracking in Michigan. It will supposedly issue policy options in 2014. Many of the initial research reports were disappointing. We commented when they were released, and we will continue to monitor its work. If you are unfamiliar with our comments on their work please visit Anglers’ Homepage (www.ausableanglers.org) and scroll down the right sidebar. The link will be under the cover of this issue.)
- **LOCAL COALITION BUILDING** – Without question, the biggest dividend of the Holy Water mineral lease issue was the coalition that was formed to respond to the ill conceived plans of the State. (*Anglers would like to thank again everyone from our members to the leaders of the organizations that stood with us, and everyone in between, for their efforts last November and December.*) We need to build on the relationships we created during this fight. The key will be to continue to nurture and create connections with local governments, businesses, and property owners. These grassroots links will serve to strengthen the foundation of our efforts, and help us communicate with the policy makers who currently hold the fate of our rivers in their hands.
- **STATEWIDE EFFORT NEEDED** – The oil and gas industry is formidable. All one has to do is switch on the television to see the propaganda effort currently under way. Industry groups have a pile of

money, and they are using it in order to get their message across. We need to reach out to business, industry, local governments, the press and the public. We’ll need to be smart in our messaging, taking special care to base our arguments on verifiable facts. We can’t afford to take extreme positions or play fast and loose with the truth. We will need to coordinate our efforts with other local groups as well as statewide organizations with whom we have worked in the past. It is important to remember that these are difficult times for the cause of conservation and environmental protection. What used to be bipartisan approaches have devolved into polarized partisan bickering. And in periods of economic downturns when jobs are scarce, issues dealing with quality of life or postmodern concerns such as the environment don’t receive the attention they deserve. People are understandably concerned with paying the mortgage, putting food on the table, and keeping or getting employment. A well-conceived and sustained approach will be necessary if we are to succeed in protecting the upper Au Sable and Manistee watersheds.

- **RESEARCH.** There is a mountain of research to be done: Has Encana, the principal player at present, been a responsible actor in the other places where it has done business? What are the specific problems regarding the DEQ’s actions with respect to water use, chemical disclosure, well spacing, safety, alleged violations and other environmental concerns? What are other states’ experiences with oil, gas and fracking? What are they doing about it? What are the local economic impacts (plus and minus) of fracking? And what is it that we don’t know that we don’t know?

A little more than ten years ago the majority of us were first introduced to the problems of oil and gas development when Savoy Energy, LLC tried to drill near the Mason Tract Chapel. Then came the Kolka Creek case, involving treatment and disposal of groundwater contaminated by hydrocarbon production activities. We hardly had time to take a breath when concerns with pipelines crossing the river arose. Now, a new concept, fracking, has raised additional threats to the rivers we love. Perhaps someday there will be finish line, an endgame, but until then we must make sure to shape that destiny to reflect healthy riparian systems.

- Tom Baird, First Vice President

OLD SCHOOL VS. NEW SCHOOL FRACKING



Photo Credit: www.respectmyplanet.org

Aspect	Unit of Measure	Collingwood #60546	Antrim #42304
Pad Size	Acres	4.6	2.5
Water to Complete	Gallons	21,226,994	9,996
Sand Used	Pounds	8,826,623	58,215
Chemicals	Gallons	106,135	50
Time to Drill Well	Days	41	1
Time to Complete Well	Days	14	2
# Truckloads Sand	# of Trucks if full	170	1

Here is a table contrasting gas well Permit # 42304 targeting the Antrim formation in Otsego County permitted in 1989 (bottom) with the Encana Excelsior 3-25 HD1 well, permit #60546 fracked in 2012 (top). I can't contrast actual production because we only have the first 8 months on the 3-25, and the production data for the Antrim well does not go back as far as the first 8 months.



Photo Credit: www.respectmyplanet.org

COURT ENJOINS ENCANA FROM FRACKING NEAR MANISTEE HEADWATER

This is a story about a lawsuit involving hydraulic fracturing for gas in the Headwaters of the Manistee River. It is also the story of how one man, with some help from his friends, found the courage and wherewithal to fight state government and a giant petroleum concern, and required them to “do the right thing” to protect the health of residents and the environment in Kalkaska County, Michigan.

Last year, an Ingham County Circuit Judge issued a preliminary injunction against Encana Oil and Gas U.S.A., Inc., in the case of Brady v Department of Environmental Equality and Encana. The order prohibits drilling (and therefore fracking) for oil and gas at some of Encana’s well sites near the North Branch of the Manistee River. The case is now pending before an administrative tribunal within the DEQ. The preliminary injunction will remain in effect until the conclusion of the administrative hearing.

Paul Brady is the Plaintiff in this case. He is a maintenance and repair specialist for farm equipment and machinery. Paul and his family live between Grayling and Kalkaska, near Bear Lake. The North Branch of the Manistee is just to the west, and Black Creek is practically in their back yard. Paul, his wife, and their two young children moved to the area “for the quality of life, peace and quiet, and the recreational activities, which exist in the North Country.”

Paul became aware of fracking the hard way. One year he returned to a campsite in the Upper Green River area near Pinedale, Wyoming, which he had visited years before, only to find “the area had been turned into a gas field.” He later heard fracking was coming to Michigan, and he wanted to “do something,” especially because of the huge demands for water fracking entails. So Paul began researching on his own and with friends. He got a list of high volume fracking sites from the DEQ and, as he puts it, began “documenting what was going on.” They developed a website, respectmyplanet.org, which details some of the results of their work, including maps, permits, related documents, and photographs.

In the course of his research and investigation, Paul learned of Encana, the Canadian oil and gas giant. And he learned of a production method Encana was developing, called the “resource hub play.” This is a system

where numerous gas wells are drilled from a single site, or “pad,” of five or more acres. The wells are drilled one at a time, not all at once. Each well is drilled down vertically for about two miles, to the Utica/Collingwood shale formation, and then horizontally. The “horizontal leg” can run for miles, and this is where the fracking takes place. Millions of gallons of “frack fluid” (chemicals, water and sand) are pumped down under very high pressure. This fractures the shale, freeing the gas or oil that is trapped within. When one well is finished, the next can be started.

At this point, the distance between the horizontal legs, called “spacing,” can become a problem. This is because the horizontal legs may travel under ground, parallel to each other. If they are allowed to be too close together, wellbore “communication” or “interference” may occur. The fractures may overlap. Due to the extreme pressures involved, underground wellbore leaks, surface spills or blowouts could be the result if there is communication between the “old” wellbore and the “new” wellbore. There have apparently been such “frac hits” during fracking operations in Canada. The potential effects include groundwater contamination, which can be extremely difficult to locate and remediate.

Paul alleges that the DEQ granted Encana special exemptions from its standard spacing order. But, he alleges, this was done without sufficient review by the DEQ of geological and seismic data to assure interference would not occur. This, the theory goes, violated the DEQ’s duty to the public and nearby mineral rights owners because it risks their health, their minerals, and the protection of the environment.

So, Paul filed a suit against the DEQ in Ingham County. Encana intervened as a defendant. The DEQ moved to dismiss the case because Paul had not exhausted the administrative remedies available to him within the DEQ. Paul opposed that motion. He also filed his own motion: a request for a preliminary injunction to maintain the status quo -- no drilling – pending completion of the litigation.

Circuit Judge Clinton Canady agreed with the DEQ that Paul needed to exhaust his hearing rights within the DEQ. The judge gave him 30 days to file a petition with the agency. More importantly, Judge Canady issued a pre-

Court Enjoins Encana continued...

liminary injunction against Encana, “such that Defendant [Encana] shall not commence drilling operations until the conclusion of an administrative hearing[...].”

Paul has now filed an administrative petition with DEQ and is waiting to be notified of a hearing date. At the time of this writing, the position of the DEQ and Encana in the litigation is not known with certainty. In the meantime, though, Encana is enjoined from drilling at the pads involved in the litigation. (This does *not* cover Encana’s other wells in Michigan.) So, there will certainly be additional developments in the future. The Anglers of the Au Sable will continue to monitor the case closely.

We asked Paul why he was doing this. It has involved a huge amount of work. And it has been stressful, causing conflict with some local citizens, many of whom make a living, directly or indirectly, from oil and gas production in Michigan. “It’s a safety and environmental issue,” he said, as if the answer should be self-evident. So we asked, “But why you?” He paused and then said, “I have a family, including two young children. We go down to Black Creek to play, and watch the little frogs and fish. Now, they want to put gas wells in my neighborhood, each of which they say may use up to 35 million gallons of water for fracking. I’m protecting where I live. I just don’t feel like I have a choice.”

CASTING FOR CONSERVATIVES

One of our nation’s great writers lived just a short distance from the banks of the Au Sable River. Russell Kirk made his home at Piety Hill in Mecosta. Kirk, best known for his book *The Conservative Mind*, was a trusted advisor to Ronald Reagan. He fathered the American conservative movement.

Kirk wrote one of the most important, and, sadly, neglected lines in modern America: “Nothing is more conservative than conservation.”

That line is ConservAmerica’s motto. We are the national grassroots organization of Republicans for environmental protection. Progressive environmentalists and tea party patriots alike call us an ‘oxymoron’—a most unfortunate misunderstanding.

Over the past quarter century, protection of our natural resources has become a polarizing issue in politics. It didn’t used to be that way.

The first Republican president, Abraham Lincoln, protected the Yosemite Valley. The second Republican president, U.S. Grant, created the world’s first national park—Yellowstone. Theodore Roosevelt protected ten percent of the lower 48’s land. TR’s right-hand man and future governor of Pennsylvania, Gifford Pinchot, started the U.S. Forestry service. Dwight Eisenhower placed the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge out of harm’s way. Richard Nixon signed our most revered environmental legislative acts. Michigan’s own Gerald Ford signed the first CAFE standards, beginning the process of squeezing more miles

and less pollution out of every gallon of gasoline.

Iowa Republican John Lacey authored our landmark wildlife protection act—the Lacey Act. A Republican from Pennsylvania coal country, John Saylor, was the key figure in passage of The Wilderness Act and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

Ronald Reagan is responsible for the greatest reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in history. When scientists presented him with compelling evidence about damage to the earth’s ozone layer, Reagan went against his political advisors and pushed through the international treaty known as the Montreal Protocol that phased out specific greenhouse gases.

George H. W. Bush used cap and trade to curb acid rain, which was plaguing lakes and forests across America, including Michigan.

There are many reasons why it seems conservatives and Republicans have walked away from this great heritage, and from the conservative principles that should guide conservation policy. Perhaps the biggest reason is money. When a small handful of wealthy business people wield the threat of a primary race against any incumbent who dares oppose personal agendas, it unfairly skews public policy against science, reason, and common sense.

Complicating matters is the increasingly huge amounts of money poured into politics by progressive pro-environment funders. Their messaging perpetuates the myth that only one party cares about clean air, clean water, and a

healthy climate, and pushes GOP incumbents deeper into the arms of those who oppose any candid conversation about our environment.

Fortunately, there is good reason to be optimistic that natural resource conservation will once again become a nonpartisan priority. Voters under the age of 30 accept climate science as a matter of fact, and cast their votes overwhelmingly for pro-environment candidates. Faith voters, often taken for granted by conservative politicians, are rapidly connecting clean air and clean water to their pro-life values. Pope Francis reportedly is prepping an encyclical on Creation Care that could be conservation's Pentecostal moment. Holy Waters is an apt name for the Au Sable—water is mentioned 722 times in the Bible. Combined, this is a huge swath of the electorate to which the GOP must answer.

Last year, a well-known Republican micro-targeting consultant sampled red districts to determine grassroots Republican support for conservation. The firm concluded that the average congressional district has about 25,000 ardent Republican voters who believe environmental protection should be a priority.

Senator Lindsey Graham said shortly after climate legislation died in 2010, "Environmental groups are really good about getting their members to call, write, and email us. The problem is those people don't vote Republican. We need to hear from Republicans." That, in a nutshell, is the niche filled by ConservAmerica. We are the meeting point for Republicans and conservatives from all walks of life who do care, and who want their uniquely Republican voice heard in Washington and in state capitols like Lansing. Contrary to public opinion, there are a lot of us out here.

People like you and me—the hook and bullet crowd—are assumed conservatives because we own guns or pricey 9' rods. We're the ones who see firsthand the impact of pol-

lution and unchecked industry on our natural resources. We're the ones who walk and wade in the outdoors, and know all too well what might be lost and lost forever. Our common voice is crucial to the cause of conservation.

A few years ago, I was ankle deep in Wyoming's Gros Ventre River, casting a Fat Albert into seams for cutthroat. The current was fast, fed by snow melt in the surrounding mountains, and the reflections of cottonwoods and sub-alpine firs engaged in a mesmerizing dance on the water. I was lost, deep in meditative thought, as is known only to cloistered religious and fly fishermen.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw an animal mid-stream coming at me. A beaver, I thought, but, no, a moose calf. It was dead and floating on the whims of the current, until it hung up on a small island of river rock within casting distance downriver. While watching the poor animal, willing its lungs to fill with air and to stand up to shake off death, I heard a mournful sound reverberating from upstream. I turned and watched as a cow moose splashed around a bend. She bawled her baleful call for her calf and continued towards me. My position was precarious, between a confused and maybe angry mother and her dead offspring. I retrieved my line and launched myself across the channel onto the forested shore, beyond which my car was parked a half mile away.

As I was racing out of harm's way, it occurred to me that I was in grizzly country, and that a grizzly may have killed the calf. Rather than running from danger, I might be running right into its paws. Fear charged my body, as if my blood had reversed course and was scraping against the scales of my veins. For a fleeting moment, I was not separate from nature, but wholly part of it.

Through our stories and shared experiences, and our desire to pass our rod, creel, and sacred waters on to the next generation, we rise above political labels. Sometimes, though, different waters demand different flies.

- Rob Sisson, President of ConservAmerica

(Rob Sisson is president of ConservAmerica, the national organization of Republicans for environmental protection. Rob is a former mayor of the City of Sturgis, where he resides. In 2000, he was named Michigan Small Business Advocate of the Year. In 2008, he was named Michigan Environmental Leader of the Year by Michigan League of Conservation Voters. His rod of choice is a Temple Fork Outfitters Lefty Kreh model. www.conservamerica.org)

As with all of our guest columnists, Mr. Sisson's opinions are his own and do not necessarily reflect those of Anglers of the Au Sable.

WHY POLITICS MATTERS: PRESERVING AND PROTECTING MICHIGAN'S GLORIOUS WORLD CLASS WATERWAYS

NOTE: *The Michigan League of Conservation Voters is a family of organizations made up of the Michigan League of Conservation Voters Education Fund (501c3), the Michigan League of Conservation Voters (501c4), and two nonpartisan political action committees.*

As the executive director of the Michigan League of Conservation Voters, I frequently get asked “What brought you to this line of work?” My answer is two fold: (1) educating our decision-makers about critical environmental challenges in our state is extraordinarily important, especially in an era of term limits, and (2) whom we elect to office at the local, state and national level is paramount to the protection of our Great Lakes and Michigan’s world class waterways.

I’m not talking “elect” in a partisan way. I’m talking about electing strong leaders to office who will do the right thing to protect our inland lakes, rivers, streams and Great Lakes; our expansive public lands; and the air we breathe no matter the letter that falls behind their name. Having well-informed conservation-minded people in office ensures that strong laws are passed to protect the essence of what an organization, such as the Anglers of the Au Sable, was founded to do: preserve, protect and enhance the Au Sable River system for future generations of anglers.

Due to state leadership and bipartisan cooperation in the 1970s and 80s, Michigan built a national reputation as a leader in natural resources protection with the passage of landmark legislation such as the Michigan Environmental Protection Act, the Wetlands Protection Act, and the Inland Lakes and Streams Act. Due to national leadership and bipartisan cooperation at the federal level, our nation was able to establish our beloved national park system and pass landmark legislation to establish the Environmental Protection Agency, the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, and the Endangered Species Act. In both cases these laws were passed with Republicans at the helm--governing the state and nation--and with handshakes across the aisle.

Unfortunately, in the intervening years, Michigan’s elected officials, in tandem with the rest of the nation, have become more and more polarized along party lines, and the issue of conservation and environmental protection has somehow been wrapped up in the partisanship. This has had an increasingly detrimental impact on our natural resources as the false dichotomy that pits environmental protection against economic development has found firm footing in the political arena.

Let’s look at this through the lens of expanded horizontal hydraulic fracturing in Michigan. Over the past many years, Michigan LCV has built an increasingly strong, trustworthy relationship with the Anglers of the Au Sable from an “educate and activate” 501(c)(3) perspective in regard to the rapid proliferation of horizontal hydraulic fracturing (or “fracking”), notably in northern Michigan. Together, and in partnership with other conservation allies like the Michigan Environmental Council, Trout Unlimited and Tip of the Mitt Watershed council, we have developed a pragmatic approach to educating our term-limited legislature, the administration--from the Governor’s office to the department heads at the DNR and DEQ-- and the waning media about the consequences of granting oil and gas leases in the context of an outdated and inadequate regulatory regime. What has become apparent, notably to those in the eye of the storm (i.e. Kalkaska County and the headwaters of the Manistee River), is that the rules on the books here in Michigan may have worked well for the vertical hydrofracking done throughout the last several decades, but given the enormous increase in water and chemical use, growing questions related to waste water disposal, and impacts on communities due to truck traffic, diesel emissions, well infrastructure, it’s time to update Michigan’s laws governing the oil and natural gas extraction.

In December 2013, the Anglers and their friends (Michigan LCV among them) won a key victory in protecting the Holy Waters from the impacts of horizontal hydrofracking. Following a series of key meetings and an influx of thousands of letters from citizens throughout the state, DNR Director Keith Creagh decided there will be no oil and gas exploration along the “Holy Waters” corridor. This decision came at the December 12 meeting of the Natural Resources Commission, with Director Creagh basically reversing the Department of Natural Resources initial plan to allow natural gas development on several parcels near the Au Sable. Director Creagh used his authority to change the proposed leases to “non-development” status and modified them to remove language allowing reclassification of surface use without public notice and a whole new lease process. This was a huge victory for the Anglers, your many allies and, most importantly, for the River itself.

Celebrate we must, but we must also understand this is a victory in the short run, with the proliferation of proposed natural gas leases creating an ongoing and substantial threat to waterways throughout the state. It’s now time for our elected officials, notably the state legislature and

the Governor (who has spoken clearly and consistently about the importance of natural gas in Michigan's energy future, highlighting the key role it will play as we transition away from coal) to upgrade the rules governing hydrofracking. If natural gas drilling is to be done with a guarantee of safety, it is essential that Michigan move in the direction found in neighboring states like Illinois.

The current state legislature, however, has slowly and methodically eroded key natural resources protections originally put in place through decades of bipartisanship. In the last year, alone, the Michigan legislature has successfully passed and garnered the Governor's signature to:

- Overhaul Michigan's once highly praised and admired wetlands protections program (SB 163), jeopardizing the state's control over the program and threatening federal takeover, and rolling back baseline protections of our waterways
- Amend Michigan's Critical Dunes Act (HB 5647) to allow road building and other proposed developments in Michigan's 80,000 acres of critical dunes, making it more difficult for citizens to request a public hearing before the issuance of a permit, prohibiting local critical dune zoning ordinances stricter than the state's model ordinance, prohibiting a local government from requiring an environmental impact statement except for special use projects, and removing the prohibition on permitting uses which are not in the public interest.

This is also the same legislature that believed it was wise to pass a law preventing the Governor and the agencies he directs from establishing protections for the Great Lakes that are stricter than those at the federal level (HB 4326). Fortunately, Governor Snyder issued one of his first vetoes in response, thus preserving his right and the right of future governors to enforce crucial regulations to protect the Great Lakes, just as Governor Milliken did in the past to save Lake Erie from toxic algae blooms in 1976 when no action was emanating from the hallowed halls of our state or national Capitals.

As we head into 2014, the prospect for bipartisan action to strengthen our laws protecting Michigan's waterways from the increased threat of hydraulic fracking is grim. Conservation and environmental experts agree that our Lansing elected officials must (1) upgrade and refine

the water withdrawal process for all large water users in Michigan, which including upgrading the Water Withdrawal Assessment Tool (WWAT), conducting baseline studies of groundwater quantity and quality, and eliminating the exemption of the oil and gas industry from use of the WWAT; and (2) strengthen and improve hydrofracking regulations, which includes requiring full disclosure of the amounts and names of chemicals, water source, and water quantity before a well is permitted, and requiring wastewater to be treated like other potentially hazardous substances. Yet there exists little to no political will within the House and Senate chambers to make this happen.

This is why elections matter so much. 2014 provides us--the Michigan citizenry--the opportunity to elect strong leaders to office who will take the right steps to ensure that hydraulic fracking is done safely in a state whose whole existence is defined by water. As home to almost 20% of the earth's fresh surface water, we have an enormous stewardship responsibility, one which--I would argue--candidates for office must embrace fully if they hope to represent us at the local, state or federal levels.

With a U.S. Senate race, a gubernatorial race, congressional races (some of which will be highly competitive at either the primary or general election level), as well as the entirety of the state House and Senate up for election/re-election, Michigan citizens have an big opportunity to elect solid conservation-minded officials to office when they enter the ballot box in November. Most will be thinking about jobs and the economy, about health care and education. It is our job to ensure that citizens are also thinking about the protection of our water, air and land.

At the Michigan League of Conservation Voters, we have the tools and infrastructure to move seamlessly from lawmaker education to elected official accountability to direct action in candidate campaigns. We keep tabs on the legislature through our annual Scorecard. We track the Governor's action through our How Green is Your Governor tool on our website. We even evaluate the third branch of government--the Michigan Supreme Court--in their decision-making and impact on natural resources protection through Green Gavels.

Later this year, we will roll up our sleeves and get involved in the elections. We invite citizens from Lake Huron to Lake Michigan and from Lake Erie to Lake Superior to join us because whom we elect really does matter.

- Lisa Wozniak, Executive Director of the Michigan League of Conservation Voters family of organizations.

More information on the Scorecard, How Green is Your Governor and Green Gavels can be found at www.michiganlcvt.org under "Track How Your Elected Officials Vote."

As with all guest columnist Ms. Wozniak's opinions are her own and do not necessarily reflect those of Anglers of the Au Sable.

DNR APPROVES CRAWFORD COUNTY LAND TRANSFER TO KIRTLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE

The Department of Natural Resources has announced its approval of a land transfer of roughly 128 acres of state-managed forestland to Kirtland Community College for the purpose of developing a health sciences center between Grayling and Roscommon. The move was announced at this week's meeting of the Natural Resources Commission in Lansing.

The DNR transferred the parcel to Kirtland Community College for a nominal fee of \$300 (the cost of the required land-transfer application) to further education and local economic development in the area.

The college anticipates building a regional health sciences facility east of the I-75 interchange on the north side of Four Mile Road. College officials said this location would provide easy access for students, teachers and visitors.

"This land transaction is an excellent example of the state working with local officials to boost regional growth and prosperity," said DNR Director Keith Creagh. "We remain committed to identifying distinct parcels such as this one that can benefit local communities, while at the same time maintaining a robust portfolio of public lands that are accessible to hunters and anglers across Michigan to promote the state's great outdoors heritage."

Kirtland Community College President Dr. Thomas Quinn said the new center will be used for training and education in all facets of the medical profession, including nursing, phlebotomy, emergency medical technician, paramedics, health information services, pharmacy, cardiac and vascular sonography, and surgical technology.

"The demand for qualified health care professionals continues to grow, especially in our region where the population is aging," he said. "Acquiring this property from the DNR allows Kirtland to expand our commitment to providing essential health care training in a variety of high-demand health career fields. The location on I-75 offers convenience and accessibility to residents in not only our service areas, but also to a wider range of neighboring communities, all of whom are seeking high-quality, affordable educational opportunities."

In 2000, the DNR entered into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Grayling Township and the Economic Development Partnership regarding the availability and future use of more than 1,600 acres of state forestland in this area. The purpose of the MOU was to develop a growth management proposal that would guide the availability of state-managed land for potential sale to assist in industrial growth.

The college became aware of the MOU and began discussions with the DNR, Grayling Township and the Economic Development Partnership about a proposal to develop an extension campus on the site. After working to develop a proposal that was acceptable to all parties, Kirtland Community College submitted a business plan for the extension campus. The approval will transfer the land parcel from the state of Michigan to the college.

For more about the DNR's plan for managing public land, visit www.michigan.gov/dnrlandstrategy.

- Kerry Wieber, DNR, Ed Golder, DNR, and Sarah Madonna, Kirtland Community College

TROUT BIGGER, BUT FEWER BELOW MIO IN 2013

It wasn't really all that shocking, although a select group of trout would strongly disagree.

The 2013 trout survey below Mio confirmed what just about anybody who spent time down there last season had already surmised: a lot more big fish, but not as many altogether. Despite the drop in numbers, and an almost non-existent rainbow trout fishery, last year matched the often-overheated rhetoric about the Big Water's ability to

produce large fish.

There are some sound reasons to be concerned going forward. The total number of brown trout declined 47% over the year before, mitigating what had been an encouraging 20% increase in 2012. The tale for rainbow trout was far worse. The number of 'bows fell 90% in 2013 to the lowest frequency recorded below Mio this century. This trout had also shown a dramatic rebound in 2012 with a 584%

increase over 2011 numbers.

Other metrics also reflected the downturn. The number of trout per acre, 19 for brown trout and *just 1 for rainbows*, were the lowest recorded for this data set, which was first initiated in 1999. The number of pounds per acre, 11.4 for browns and 0.7 for rainbows, were only higher than the figures for 2005 – a year when many Mio anglers felt the fishery bottomed out.

There is good news, however, about bigger fish, but it might only be for the short term. Looking at tables 1 through 4 one can see the trends for several size groups of brown trout since 2010. The population for teenaged trout (**Table 2**) and true giants (**Table 3**) have both increased since 2010. This is especially true for the teenagers. Not only have their numbers shot up 349% since 2010, they are also the only cohort with a population increase in each of the last three years. The success of the teen-wonders and the solid numbers for the 21-inch and more oldsters indicates that trophy fishing should be OK next year and maybe even the year after that.

Then it could get very dicey.

The trends for the younger fish in the system are going the other way, big time. **Table 1** shows the frequencies for browns in the next generation. These are the fish that have survived that crucial first year and out grew some

threats while “learning how to be a stream trout.” They are also a blast to catch on a three weight. That cohort has declined 59% since 2010. This finding coupled with the steady dwindling of the overall numbers (**Table 4**) point to the potential for a significantly diminished fishery by mid decade if the trends continue.

The statistics for rainbows are so ugly that this article would receive an R rating. What is happening to the rainbow trout population below Mio is beginning to have the feel of science fiction. Are aliens stealing our rainbows for nefarious plans? Or is it just that Bigfoot so many folks have seen around Mio having too many fish fries? Even if the answer is more prosaic the problem is just as daunting – rainbow trout simply do not survive well below Mio.

There is a wildcard in the deck. We don’t have the breakdowns for groups of browns. The data for the *Wild Rose, Sturgeon River* strains plus the numbers for wild fish are not available yet. Past articles in *The RIVERWATCH* (see issue 62) have reported in glowing terms about the success of the *Sturgeon River* strain, but what is really beginning to turn heads are the number of wild trout showing up in the collection tubs.

Josh Greenberg, who along with Bruce Pregler – (“I was very impressed with the speed and detail of the DNR staff in measuring, weighing and scaling each trout,” Bruce re-

Table 1 – Frequencies for brown trout 10 to 13 inches (The Next Generation) 2010 to 2013.

Year	# Brown Trout	+/- previous year	+/- since 2010
2010	677	N/A	-----
2011	870	+28.5%	+28.5%
2012	775	-10.9%	+14.4%
2013	277	-64.4%	-59%

Table 2 – Frequencies for brown trout 14 to 20 inches (The Teenagers) 2010 to 2013.

Year	# Brown Trout	+/- previous year	+/- since 2010
2010	71	N/A	-----
2011	109	+53.5%	+53.5%
2012	235	+115.5%	+230.9%
2013	319	+35.7%	+349.2%

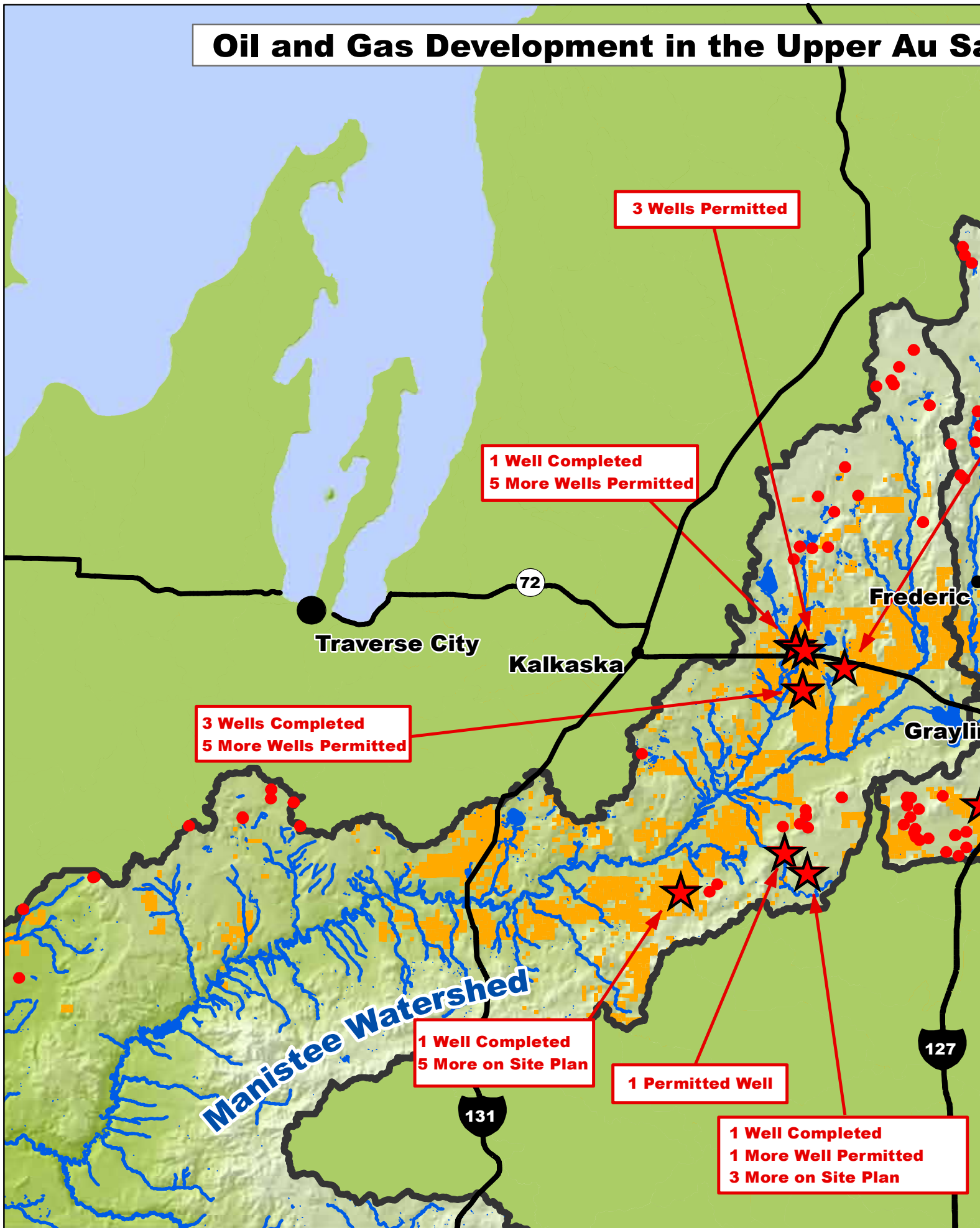
Table 3 – Frequencies for brown trout 21+ inches (The True Giants) 2010 to 2013.

Year	# Brown Trout	+/- previous year	+/- since 2010
2010	28	N/A	-----
2011	61	+117.8%	+117.8%
2012	23	-62.2%	-17.8%
2013	48	+108.6%	+71.4%

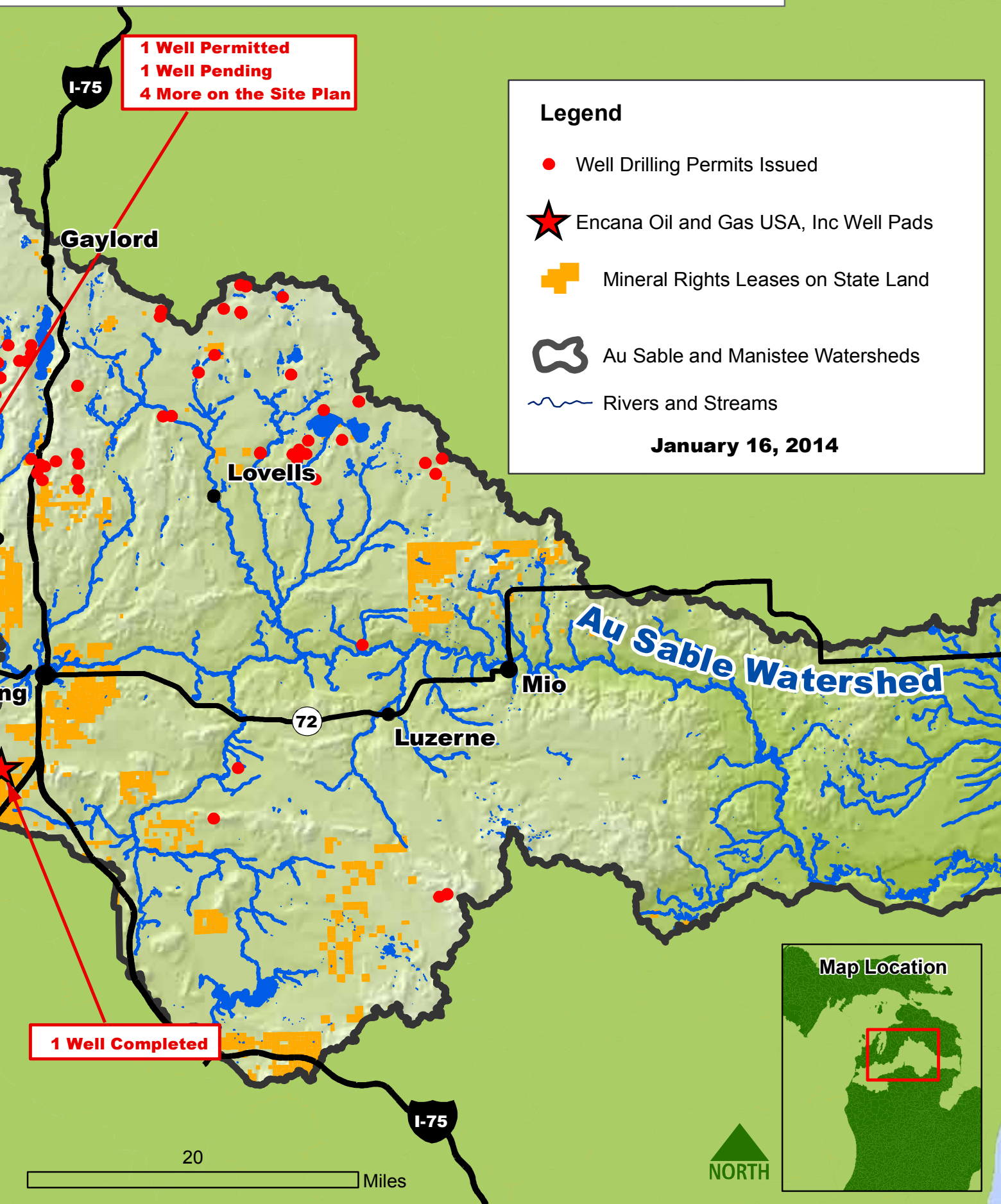
Table 4 – Frequencies for brown trout (Overall) 2010 to 2013.

Year	# Brown Trout	+/- previous year	+/- since 2010
2010	7,607	N/A	-----
2011	3,216	-57.7%	-57.7%
2012	3,873	+20.4%	-49%
2013	2,026	-47.6%	-73.3%

Oil and Gas Development in the Upper Au Sa



Au Sable and Manistee Watersheds Since 2009





THE AU SABLE RIVER ECONOMY – “IT’S HUGE”

Many of us take time each season to sit on the well-worn riverside bench at Gates Lodge. There’s always something to see, always something in the river to consider between drags on a fresh cigar.

Personally, I enjoy the mid-summer Saturday afternoon drama of canoes crashing into the hanging tree at the Bread Hole. More peacefully, it’s a favorite spot to watch for bugs. The trout “out front” seem paid to perform, surfacing daily to eat all season long.

Next time you’re on that bench, close your eyes, listen to the currents, and consider that it’s not just water flowing down our river. Money and jobs – indeed an entire waterborne economy – flow down the river, too.

Anglers of the Au Sable board members are increasingly taking the time to illustrate the river economy to powerful business interests and politicians. We think it’s simply good politics to do so – especially in this era when economic growth is the root motivation for so much public policy.

The CEO of Enbridge connected to the river economy immediately when we brought him to Grayling after the 2010 Kalamazoo River oil spill. Enbridge responded by making hundreds of thousands of dollars in pipeline safety improvements in the Au Sable corridor. More recently, DNR Director Keith Creagh made a similar economic connection in his decision last December to refuse to open up the Holy Waters corridor to surface oil and gas drilling.

In the future, it’s Anglers’ job to assure that policy makers as close as Crawford County and as far away as Lansing and Washington, D.C. carefully consider the full impact on the river economy when weighing the kinds of development “opportunities” we’ve seen over the years – like hatcheries, amusement parks, forestry, oil and gas drilling (including fracking), and who knows what else.

The Anglers board is steadily building the *economic* case for Au Sable conservation. It’s time we shared with all members what we’re learning so far – and how we’re using that knowledge to protect the river.

RIVERFRONT REAL ESTATE: A HUGE ECONOMIC FOOTPRINT

Many of us go to the river to escape the trappings of civilization, but on your next trip into Grayling for supplies chances are good you'll encounter a school bus, or a police car, or an ambulance at some point. The next time you see one of those public vehicles, consider this...

Riverfront property owners in Crawford County pay for about a quarter of all the gasoline those public vehicles use. In fact, Crawford County's riverfront property owners pay 22.5 percent of all property taxes in the county – even though they own only 11 percent of the property. Riverfront owners collectively paid more than \$3.3 million in Crawford County property taxes in 2012.

Altogether, cabin and home owners along the Au Sable and Manistee rivers account for 25.7 percent of total property value in Crawford County. Those riverfront properties have a combined market value of \$275 million.

Where do we come up with these numbers? From one of Michigan's most-respected public policy consulting firms. Anglers of the Au Sable recently commissioned Public Sector Consultants, Inc. to use county property records and tax rolls to calculate riverfront property values and taxes paid in six northern Michigan counties. We did so with the help of one extremely generous donor who paid for the study. The results were eye opening. Specifically, Public Sector Consultants demonstrated that riverfront property has a far larger economic impact in Crawford County than in any other county studied.

Details:



Fishing and relaxing on the Au Sable puts money in a lot of local pockets.

This is exactly why Anglers President Bruce Pregler described the Au Sable as the “economic lifeblood” of the Crawford County area during the recent Holy Waters drilling debate with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

Now, add to the raw property values all sorts of economic spinoff. Consider, for example, the Crawford County builders, plumbers, electricians, masons, snow plowers, caretakers, landscapers, realtors and others who depend on riverfront property owners for their livelihoods. Clearly, the true economic impact of riverfront property in Crawford County is much, much larger than raw property values and tax revenues.

So it's no wonder that our recent fight against Holy Water drilling was joined by The City of Grayling, Grayling Township, and leading real estate agencies including ReMax of Grayling and Century 21 River Country.

After all, as we outlined to the DNR, the state would re-

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF RIVERFRONT PROPERTY IN SIX NORTHERN MICHIGAN COUNTIES

COUNTY	MAIN RIVERS OF INTEREST	TOTAL RIVERFRONT PARCELS	TOTAL RIVERFRONT PROPERTY VALUE	RIVERFRONT PROPERTY TAXES PAID (2012)	% OF TOTAL COUNTY PROPERTY VALUE THAT IS RIVERFRONT	% OF TOTAL PROPERTY TAXES PAID BY RIVERFRONT OWNERS
Crawford	Au Sable, Manistee	1,926	\$ 274,842,600	\$3,332,256	25.7%	22.5%
Kalkaska	Manistee, Boardman	555	\$ 75,048,550	\$907,061	4.5%	3.6%
Lake	Pere Marquette, Baldwin	1,330	\$ 165,058,100	\$2,076,249	11.5%	8.6%
Manistee	Manistee	492	\$ 63,796,000	\$789,523	2.5%	2.1%
Otsego	Pigeon, Sturgeon, Black	225	\$ 57,171,000	Not available.	2.2%	Not available.
Roscommon	Au Sable	266	\$ 21,713,600	\$280,021	0.8%	0.7%

Source: Public Sector Consultants, Inc. analysis of county property records, equalization records, and tax receipts. (August 2013)

The Au Sable River Community continued...

ceive less than \$100,000 from surface leases for oil and gas development in the Holy Waters. Potentially, public royalties on actual minerals recovered might eventually be much more. But no matter how much oil and gas drillers could recover, it stretches the imagination to think the royalties could ever come close to matching the value of the existing Au Sable properties and the full river economy. Surface drilling in the Holy Waters was, in our view,

a prime example of pennywise and pound-foolish development. And it would have occurred very near Rusty Gates' backyard.

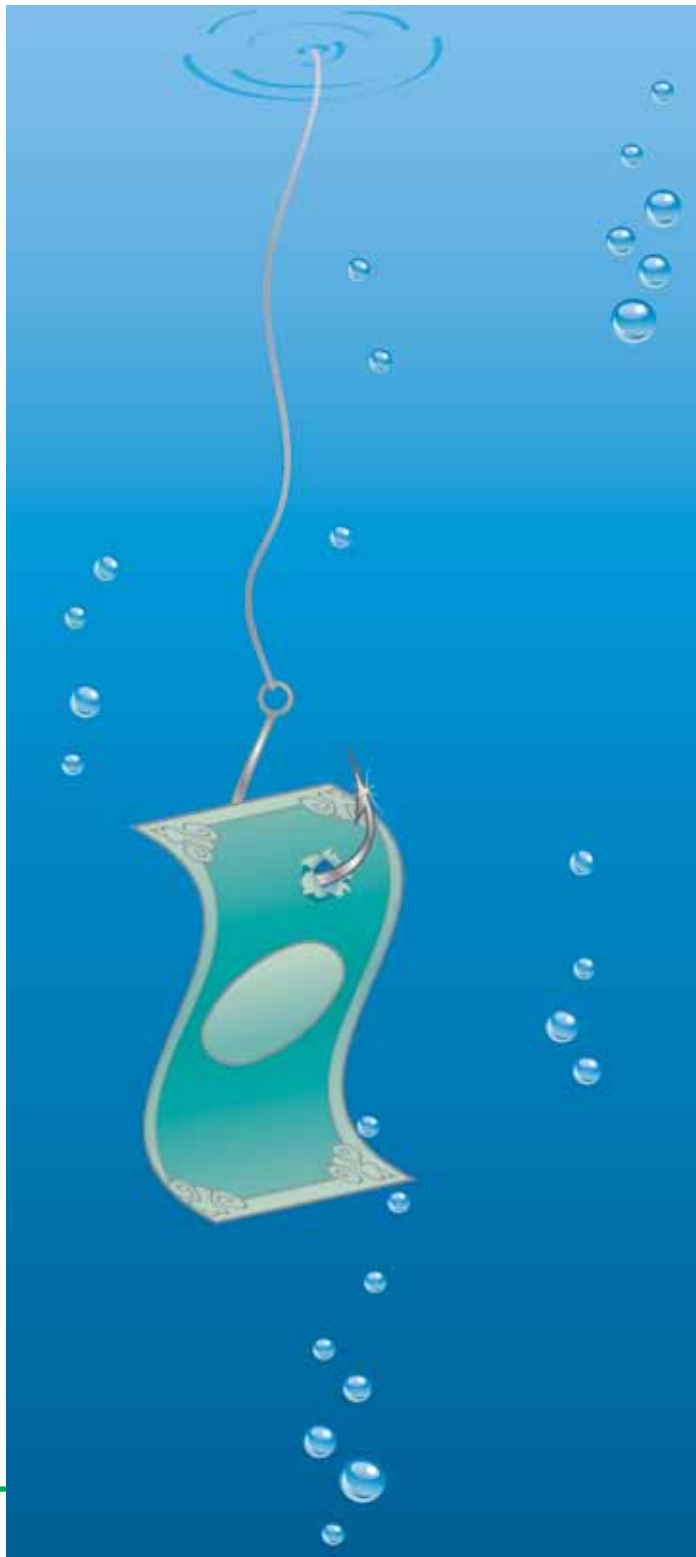
In the end, the economic argument – powered by Public Sector Consultants' research – contributed, we believe, to the DNR's decision to say no to surface drilling in the Holy Waters corridor.

LESSONS FROM THE DRIFTLESS REGION'S ANGLING ECONOMY

But Anglers of the Au Sable is not a property owners association. Many of our members and many other anglers in the region are not property owners. Those many who merely visit without planting stakes in the ground have their own huge economic impact throughout the Au Sable corridor.

Future examinations of angler behavior by Anglers of the Au Sable, Michigan Trout Unlimited, and academic researchers will likely provide many details about the economic impact of trout fishing on Michigan rivers. (See companion story about Michigan TU's upcoming Michigan Trout Anglers Study.)

For the moment, we can learn from the economy of the Driftless Area – the trout streams at the intersection of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa and Illinois. Rusty Gates himself introduced Anglers of the Au Sable to "The Economic Impact of Recreational Trout Angling in the Driftless Area," a 2008 report commissioned by Trout Unlimited and written by NorthStar Economics, Inc. a consulting group.



The Driftless study surveyed 1,500 anglers in the region and estimated that anglers there, on average:

- Spent \$210 total per outing on a wide range of goods and services, including fishing supplies, guides, restaurants and bars, gasoline, lodging, groceries, clothing, and souvenirs.
- Made 15 fly fishing outings per year.

That's more than \$3,000 of investment by each Driftless angler each year.

How does the Driftless study translate to the Au Sable river economy? It's hard to say. But we can make some rough guesses.

Michigan's total recreational fishing economy is more than \$2 billion a year, according to the American Sportfishing Association. The Michigan DNR sells nearly 1.2 million fishing licenses per year. About one-third of those licenses are the kinds of "all species" licenses used by trout anglers as well as salmon and steelhead anglers who fish in rivers and the Great Lakes. And it's worth noting

that all-species licenses – especially those purchased by young anglers, retirees, and anglers from other states – are the only area of growth in Michigan fishing license sales in recent years.

Conservatively, let's say only five percent of those "all species" license holders fish the Au Sable each year. That would still amount to 20,000 anglers per year. Let's say those anglers all spent the same \$210 per trip found in the Driftless study. But, to be conservative, let's assume each Au Sable angler makes just three trips per year on average – only one-fifth as many trips as estimated by the Driftless study.

Twenty thousand anglers making three visits per year to the Au Sable, each spending \$210 per trip would amount to direct investment in the Au Sable region of \$12.6 million per year.

Here's another way to ponder the economic impact of Au Sable angling: The two main fly shops in Grayling – Old Au Sable and Gates Lodge – sold slightly more than 3,000 fishing licenses combined in 2013. We can probably add in another 1,000 regulars combined from Fuller's North Branch Outing Club, the Mio/Big Water angling community, and others who fish the Au Sable but buy their license online or elsewhere. Altogether, these 4,000 anglers represent what we might call the Au Sable's "hard-core trout bum addicts."

Let's assume these 4,000 hard-core Au Sable trout bums match the behavior estimated in the Driftless study – 15 trips a year each with average spending of \$210 per per-

son per trip.

Four thousand Au Sable anglers making 15 visits per year, each spending \$210 per trip would once again amount to direct investment in the Au Sable region of \$12.6 million per year.

So, what's the exact total economic impact of the Au Sable River and its fisheries? Nobody knows for sure at this point. And the calculations above are, admittedly, a bit of a voodoo exercise.

But, take the known value of riverfront property and related taxes in Crawford County. Add in a rough but quite possibly conservative estimate of \$12 million in annual direct angler spending. Then add in the tourism spending on canoe-related recreation and the annual Au Sable Canoe Marathon which is generally recognized as the river's most popular weekend of the year. Then add in the value of real estate commissions, contractor services on riverfront properties, and spinoff economic activity.

Add it all up, and the Au Sable economy might be \$30 million, or \$50 million, or more. No matter the final mysterious number, "It's HUGE," to borrow a favorite phrase from our founder, Rusty Gates.

The Census Bureau estimated that all Crawford County residents combined earned a total of \$300 million in income from all sources in 2012. It's not too much of a stretch of the imagination to assume that the river economy deserves credit for 10-20 percent of that total county-wide income.

APPLYING TROUT FISHING PRINCIPLES TO PUBLIC POLICY



People come from all over the country to the Mason Tract on the South Branch to fish, hunt, hike, cross country ski and just enjoy its beauty - they bring money, too, lots of it over the year.

Fly fishing, especially on the often-technical, match-the-precise-hatch conditions of the Au Sable, is a thinking person's game. Every hour of every day is different. What's the air temperature? What's the water temperature? What's the cloud cover? What's the barometric pressure? Is it going to rain? What's the water clarity? What's the moon cycle? Where are we in the hatch cycle? Where did we have hatchers last night? Where are we likely to see spinners tonight? How can I zig when others zag and avoid the crowds?

A couple years before Rusty died, he featured Anglers board member Lance Weyeneth – our resident "River Specialist" real-

The Au Sable River Community continued...

tor – in his fishing report for a classic example of zigging while other anglers zagged. It was the beginning of June and most anglers were flocking to the Au Sable for the brown drake hatch. Lance instead found glory way west, in the highest reaches of the Upper Manistee. Lance found the biggest fish of the week – and one of the very biggest caught that season – way up in Deward. Lance was presenting sulphurs at dusk with only one quiet companion while everybody else was elbow-to-elbow on the North Branch. Lance made great calculations in his situation analysis that night.

Sometimes, though, when the big hatches are in full swing, angling success requires hard-ball tactics. Last summer, I rolled up on a favorite hex spot with three members of our River Pirate crew. The sun was still an hour up in the sky when we arrived at the river, but we were way too late. Anglers board member John Walters was already camped in our favorite hundred yards of river with three of his own crew. We both laughed. John's situation analysis, preparation, and hard ball tactics were better than mine that night.

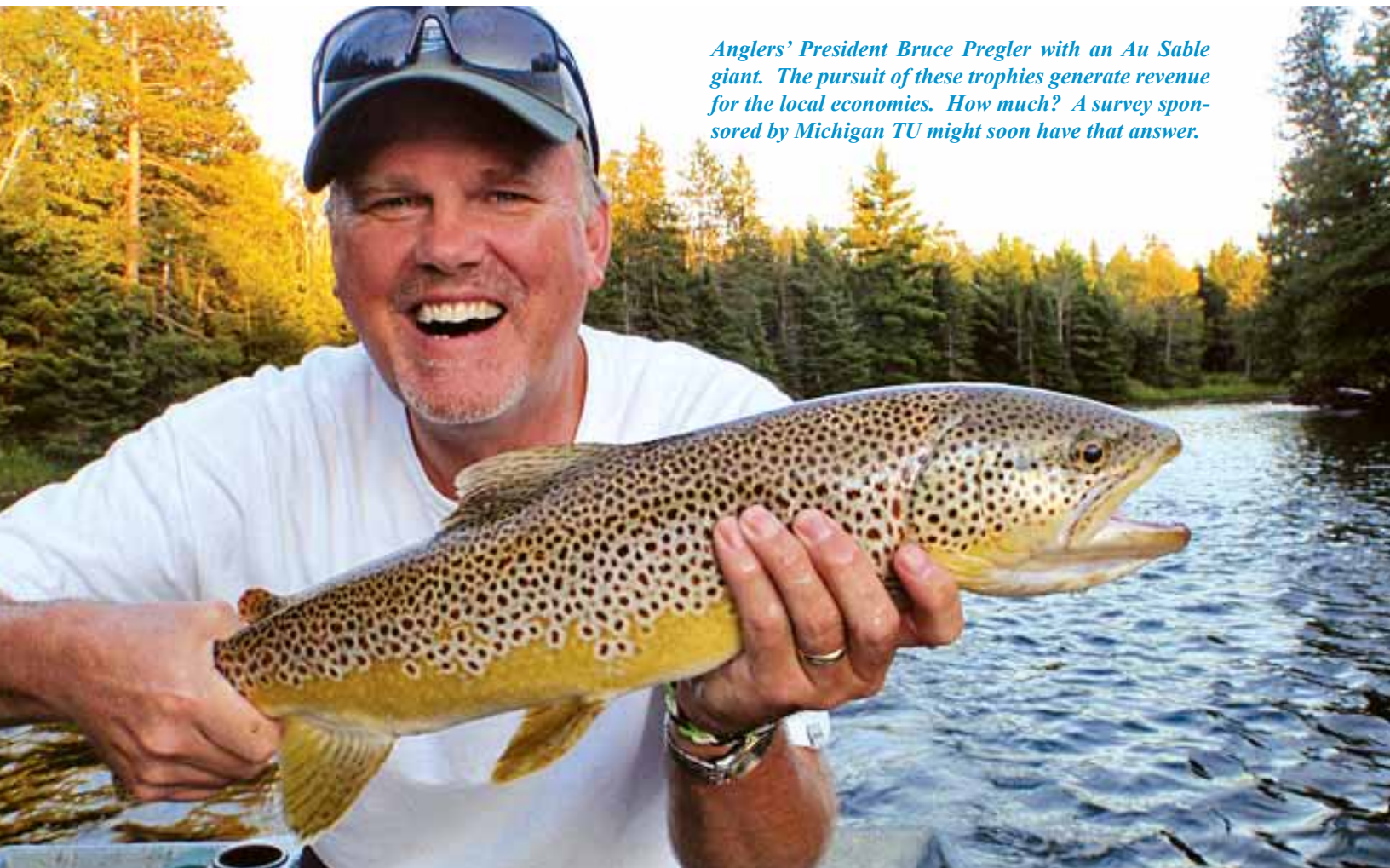
Situation analysis. Preparation. Hard ball tactics. Sometimes you need all three to fish the Au Sable successfully.

You almost always need all three to win political and policy battles.

Anglers of the Au Sable has always relied on the angling instincts of its members to win political and policy battles. Back in the beginning, when Democrat Jim Blanchard was governor, Anglers used environmental arguments to shame the governor in our fight against expansion of National Guard bombing ranges. (Check out those arguments for yourself and get a history lesson by reading back issues of *The RIVERWATCH* on Anglers' web site.)

A decade ago, Anglers began crafting a legal strategy to fight the Mason Tract battle in federal court – where we surely had better chances of success than state courts. That turned out to be an awfully good read of the political and legal currents. (Again, old issues of *The RIVERWATCH* provide explain the many twists and turns in that successful battle.)

Today, business and economic growth motivations are the key currency in the political climates of our state capitol as well as our local town halls. So, in December, we combined an economic argument with the hard-ball tactic of intense member action to successfully convince the DNR to do the right thing and say “no” to surface drilling in



Anglers' President Bruce Pregler with an Au Sable giant. The pursuit of these trophies generate revenue for the local economies. How much? A survey sponsored by Michigan TU might soon have that answer.



The old growth forest along the Au Sable River corridor offers superb hunting opportunities (left). The introduction of Atlantic salmon (right) below Foote Dam - supported by Anglers - may yield an economic boon not seen since the early 1970s - when their Pacific cousins were first planted here.

the Holy Waters. Indeed, our members did play hardball. The DNR reported receiving a phone call or email in opposition to Holy Waters surface drilling every few minutes in the days leading up to the decision. Many of you made economic arguments in your communications to the DNR.

Long ago, angling legend Lee Wulff declared that a trout

was too valuable to be caught only once. It turns out the Au Sable River is too valuable to be thought of in only one way. As a fishery, the Au Sable is priceless. This river's economy has plenty of zeroes on the end of it, too. That's a reality Anglers must continually explain to policy makers if we are to fully protect and enhance the fishery for future generations.

- John Bebow, 2nd Vice President

STAY TUNED: MORE DETAILS COMING SOON ON THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF MICHIGAN TROUT ANGLING

How much do trout anglers spend every time they go to the river? Which Michigan rivers are most popular among anglers? How big is the economic impact of river angling in our state?

We will soon have clearer answers to those questions thanks to a \$100,000, two-year study soon to be produced by our friends at Michigan Trout Unlimited.

Working with expert researchers at Michigan State University, Michigan TU plans to release results of its Michigan Trout Anglers Study later in 2014.

"I'm really excited," said Michigan TU Executive Director Bryan Burroughs. "This is going to be our first complete look at the full socio-economics of trout angling behavior in Michigan."

Like Anglers of the Au Sable, Michigan TU recognizes that framing the business case for rivers and angling "is everything in today's political climate," Burroughs said.

The TU study will help define such factors as:

- Where statewide anglers fish most and how they prefer to fish.
- What percentage of overall anglers prefer fly fishing.
- Among fly fishers, how many fish for trout, salmon and steelhead.
- How much anglers spend and which types of anglers invest the most on their pursuits.

"This study will put a defensible price tag on the economic value of fishing in the Au Sable River and other rivers," Burroughs said.

TU hopes to have the study completed later this spring. Michigan TU will produce a variety of communication tools about the study for use by everyday anglers, conservation groups, and policymakers.

"One of our goals is to create a new economic model of angler behavior," Burroughs said. "We've got good data."

Watch for more details of the TU research in future editions of *The RIVERWATCH*.

- John Bebow, 2nd Vice President

TELEMETRY STUDY UPDATE

Since July 2012, groups of hearty and stalwart volunteers have braved heat, cold, dark, long sleepless nights, and bugs to provide new insights on where Au Sable River brown trout live, and how they behave. Of course, the other group of volunteers for this project has been the trout themselves. Since the first brown trout “volunteered” itself for the study, a total of 69 different brown trout ranging in size from 10 inches to 24 inches (25 cm to 61 cm) and weighing between 10 oz. and 4 lb. (0.29 kg to 1.97 kg) have “participated” in the project. And at any given time, up to 45 fish from the Main, North, and South Branches were being tracked simultaneously. But all of this effort on the part of the human and fish volunteers has not simply been to find where fish “live,” or where they feed. But more important, we hope that all of this effort will reveal some of the “why” browns do what they do.

To learn the “where and the why” of Au Sable browns, trackers completed over 80 tracking events during 2012 and 2013, which has generated an extraordinary amount of data. As for the where, Au Sable brown trout have a strong attraction to in-stream structure. That in itself is certainly nothing new, but by comparing structures where fish choose to live to those lacking fish, we are beginning to see that not all structures are equal in a trout’s eyes. For example, daytime habitats used by trout were relatively larger, and more complex than unoccupied habitats. And thus, we start to learn the why.

But a daytime hiding place is only part of the story, and anyone that fishes the “hatch” knows that nighttime finds browns away from their home searching for food. Again, no big surprise! The question becomes, can we quantify the relationship between daytime “home” sites and nighttime feeding sites? In short, it seems so. Preliminary analysis suggests that browns don’t move far from home to feed and smaller fish move the same distance as bigger fish; about 100 feet on average, although North Branch fish tend to move much farther than fish in Main or South Branch. Like everything biological however, there is a considerable amount of variation among fish, with one fish moving no more than 10 feet to feed. The data also show that nighttime feeding sites are generally downstream of home sites, relatively deeper, have slower flow, and are never more than 10 feet from overhead cover.



Daytime excursions away from home sites are also more common than expected. On overcast days, browns would often head to their nighttime feeding sites. During warm summer temperatures, several fish would abandon the safety of their wood structures and move into shallow areas with good groundwater flow or small feeder streams that were often only 10 inches deep. Both habitats appear to serve as a thermal refuge for trout during warm weather.

As the project moved into fall, the browns began their annual spawning run: that innate urge to move upstream and produce the next generation of brown trout. Again, biology dictates that the name of the game is variation. The average spawning run across all three branches was approximately 3,700 feet, but actual distances travelled by individual fish ranged from as little as 8 feet to over 6 miles. And while it is not completely clear why, the North Branch browns move significantly farther to spawn than the browns on the South Branch.

Post-spawning behavior has been a regular topic of debate among those who pursue trout for sport and fisheries biologists alike. A common theory has been that browns will move downstream into deeper slower water. This is intuitively appealing because the slower flows would consume less energy and better match their lower metabolic function. However, the data for the Au Sable suggests that post-spawn browns return to their summer nighttime locations and remain there for the winter.

The data collected during the past 18 months has given us a look into the daily lives of Au Sable River brown trout. More important however, is that this information will provide an opportunity to consider new elements when making habitat and management decisions. Knowing that nighttime feeding sites are typically within 100 feet of a home site and browns seek out a cold-water refuge during warm temperatures may help identify locations for new habitat projects. But in an even broader context, the cold groundwater emerging from the bottom of the river is the result of rain and melting snow that seeps into the ground throughout the entire Au Sable River watershed. In addition to work that provides critical trout habitat, future efforts to protect this crucial groundwater resource may play a significant role in the success of Au Sable River brown trout.

Bryan Giordano, Telemetry Coordinator

FUNDS KEEP THE ACTIVITY GOING

For some people, fundraising can be an activity ranging from slightly uncomfortable to a downright dirty word. However, it is the necessary fuel that runs any non-profit organization. The Anglers organization is truly blessed to have members who are passionate and dedicated to protecting the Au Sable River. I thought it would be helpful for you to see how your generous donations to the Anglers have contributed to our efforts.

Below is a list of some of the work Anglers has done in protecting our river system.

- Prevented the discharge of treated water into Kolka Creek, the headwaters of the Au Sable.
- Stopped natural gas drilling near the Mason Tract Chapel, South Branch of the Au Sable.
- Lobbied for more river sections to year-round fishing.
- Monitored water flow, temperature and conducted chemical analysis in both the Au Sable and Manistee rivers.
- Monitored oil and gas drilling permits within river corridors; always on the lookout to challenge potentially damaging activity.
- Reached out to Enbridge to get valve installed to protect Au Sable River.
- Monitored legal cases and legislation.
- Inventoried oil and gas pipelines under the river systems.
- Currently funding a telemetry tracking program to track brown trout movement patterns.
- Improved fish cover through the strategic placement of large woody debris.
- Organized and sponsored the annual fall river clean-up.
- Continue to provide scholarships to college students for fisheries and wildlife management.

- Published *The RIVERWATCH* Magazine including a special edition on the state of the river.
- Lobbied for the planting of Atlantic salmon in the Au Sable.
- Working on increasing and improving river access on the Manistee River.
- Closely monitoring the issue of fracking and its effect on water quality and water levels. Financially helping assist in these studies.
- Closely monitoring the situation with the hatchery in Grayling and its expanded operation and what effect it will have on the river.
- Helping to maintain sand traps in the river.
- Funded repairs to the fencing and access to Dam 4 on the North Branch.
- Funded and prepared an economic impact report.
- Lobbied for fishing license increase.
- Building a closer working relationship with the Fisheries Division of the Department of Natural Resources.
- Helping sponsor youth attendance at youth trout camp.
- Funding and planting additional cedars on the Au Sable.
- Continued to inform members and public by attending various fly shows and forums.

We have a dedicated board and membership who freely give of their time in making all of this happen. However, it does cost money too. So long as the waters of the Au Sable River continue to flow into Lake Huron, there will be a need for Anglers to be vigilant and on guard to protect this precious watershed. Your continued support of Anglers will continue to make this possible. As always, for more information, please feel free to visit our website at www.ausableanglers.org. Thank you for your continued support.

- Joe Hemming, Fundraising Chair

I HATE TROUT FISHING

I spend 3-4 weeks a year on Ontario's French River. While I do some fly fishing there in June into mid July, most of my fishing is with spin and bait casting gear. My main target is muskie, but in order not to go completely mad (if you've fished for muskie, you know what I mean), I fish for walleye, pike and bass with spinning gear as well. Hell, I even use live bait.

Last fall, I emailed the owner of the lodge on the French where I regularly go. I asked her how often their guides suggest cancelling a trip due to the weather. Perfect weather: sunny, pleasant temps, and low to moderate winds. The lodge owner responded by asking, "huh?" Well, that happened to me this week. And I'm not talking about the dog days of August, with high water temps, low rivers, and plenty of canoe traffic. I'm talking about almost mid October, mid week, temps in the 60's, and perfect river levels.

I came late to fly fishing, and the Au Sable. My mentor, Bill Halliday, first coaxed me up here when I was 40 (now 65). Bill had a place on a wonderful bend of the Holy Water below Whirlpool Road. I had been fishing with a passion since I was 6 years old, but had only used a fly rod a few times and was not good at casting it. After a few trips to Bill's, I became reasonably able at fly casting, and totally taken by the Au Sable River and trout fishing. In my early years on the Au Sable, I never, ever, hesitated to go fishing because of the weather, time of year, water temps, hatches, etc. I just went fishing. And although it's been many years ago, I don't recall getting discouraged by not catching at least some trout in my learning years on the Au Sable.

In 1993, we bought a cabin on Big Creek (the Luzerne creek), and I was able to easily fish the Au Sable from Grayling to McKinley, as well as both the North and South Branches. Add my Big Creek, and the occasional jaunt to the Rifle River, and I was in fly fishing nirvana, and did a LOT of it from April through November every year.

It has taken all these years, but slowly I am, more often than not, mentally discouraged from going trout fishing due to the following:

- Water too warm
- Water too cold (I hate nymphing....likely because I suck at it)

- Too much sun
- Water too high
- Water too low
- Too many canoes (weekends especially)
- No hatches
- Hatches limited to size 18 or smaller (I am Terry Warrington's polar opposite)
- Only good fishing is very early in the day
- Only good fishing is after dark (read my *RIVER-WATCH* piece on night fishing a few years ago)

I could go on, but you likely get the idea.

So, instead of just going fishing, I now think about whether there are reasons I should not. Of late, I usually just conclude to forget it. Exceptions are primarily April streamer fishing, and Henny season. However, for 5 days this last October, to break my normal mood, I decided to "just go fly fishing." I fished the Holy Water, the South Branch, the Big Water below Mio, and the Rifle River. Total result: 5 browns less than 10 inches. The water? Perfect, due to some recent rain events. The water temps? Perfect. The weather? Perfect (the bad kind, sunny and 60's). I fished mornings and late afternoons/early evenings, so I was not fishing the high sun periods.

The above results, unfortunately, have only reaffirmed my waning interest in this pursuit.

Going back to the French River in Ontario, I have experienced at some point in time (other than hatches) all the negative conditions listed above. Almost always when encountering them, I figure out a way to catch fish. I'm not at all trying to compare the two systems; totally different. My point is, I seem to be able to adapt to the other than expected/desired conditions when I'm on the French. So far, I have not had such success fishing the Au Sable. I have gone from streamers to nymphs (grudgingly), to dry flies, and size and presentation changes. No real success.

So, why don't I just quit, as many of you reading this are likely saying.?

Well...

- 1) the minute you step into the Au Sable, take in the ambience and smell of the forest, and make that

first false cast

2) when you realize that the only sound you hear is the wind in the trees

3) when you do occasionally venture out at night and have a stiff neck for days from looking up at billions of stars, and hear the coyotes call each other in the distance

4) when you have an immature bald eagle literally dive on a fish you have hooked

5) when you are getting snagged on every branch possible trying to take a “short cut” through the woods to a good spot, and look up and see an owl looking down at you

... I just can't quit. A goddamned curse.

- John O'Neil, Member

In Our Thoughts

In Memory of Calvin Gates – Michael Toscano

In Memory of Glenn Richter – John Richter

In Honor of James J. Turner

Joan Moore

Nancy Turner

In Honor of Tom and Ellen Baird – Terry Baird

In Memory of John Sanderson

Walter and Georgiann Holly

V. Crum

Mark and Claire Haley

Marvin and Cindy Fudalla

David Kaminski

Richard and Lorraine Sanderson

Arthur and Mary Barrows

Sam Putnam, Jr.

In Memory of Thomas McInchak

John and Linda Baxter

William Kaufman

Harvey and Phyllis Pudney

Ann and Kevin Stus

Charles Kleinbrook

Michael McGraw

In Memory of John Gauthier

Kenneth Smith

Christopher and Judy Helm

David Cushing

Dr. Lee Faber

Tana Koskinen

Linda and Scott Darah

Karen Gauthier

Anonymous Donation through The Charitable Giving Card Program of The Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee



From the Editor continued...

with long stretches barren of wood.

Not everything we tried worked. The Adopt-A-Beat Plan to have individuals police their favorite fishing beats throughout the season to keep them clear of any buildup of trash was largely met with indifference. Despite a herculean effort to get the plume of potential pollutants seeping from Hoskins Manufacturing completely addressed, we failed. Although we had conversations with the Chief of the Environment Protection Agency's Region 5, and even spoke with the prosecuting attorney in the Hoskin's case, we could not overcome certain bureaucratic obstacles and a public reluctant to support funding that type of activity. The real tragedy was that there existed a plan that had potential.

At least we tried.

In all, given a small budget and about a dozen active members we punched above our weight in most instances. By this time last year, however, it had begun to occur to me that it might be best to try another approach. Things had changed on the Au Sable. In the wake of the Rusty Gates Era, Anglers had adopted a committee-based format to address the myriad of challenges involved in protecting a beloved watershed. The process was working beyond anyone's wildest imagination. A group that had wondered if it could succeed after losing an once-in-a-lifetime leader was flourishing and expanding, sometimes faster than expected.

So why not a Big Water Committee? Or even a Lower Au

Sable Committee?

The idea was even more realistic given the fact that both lawsuits had long been resolved, and while new challenges had emerged, Anglers had become so much more efficient at addressing multiple tasks.

There was a personal reason as well. At one point I was involved in five different organizations, four of them right here on the Au Sable. These commitments lead to subgroups and requests from still other groups to join them. How could I keep it in order? And how do I advocate for one group against another group I was affiliated with on a discrepancy? This took a heavy toll on me both mentally and physically. Before long my passion had been replaced by burnout. I lost my effectiveness.

It was time for a change. I began consolidating my Au Sable efforts. This is the final step in the process. Now I can serve one master, the Au Sable River, in one house, Anglers. Maybe other folks can wear multiple hats, but not me. Some folks have asked how I can let go of something that I built out of thin air. I don't see it that way. The Big Water will receive even better care under this plan. It doesn't matter whose logo is on the package.

The final details will be out this summer, probably in *RIVERWATCH* 69. I'm hoping that some of the members of the old ASBWPA might join the new Committee and help us make decisions down there and all the way to Oscoda. It's one big river and all of it needs our love.

THE TIMES THEY MIGHT BE A-CHANGING

It will likely come as no surprise to the readers of this fine periodical that the nation, as a whole, and the state, too, have different opinions on fracking than we do. Majorities and pluralities usually support it. There is evidence now to suggest their beliefs are moving toward us, and some of the groups doing the most shifting are very unexpected.

Some past national surveys on fracking have shown majorities favoring the practice. For example, a 2012 survey by Rasmussen Reports found that 57% favored hydraulic fracturing in order to produce oil and gas while only 22% opposed it, and 21% were unsure.¹

In the same year, work by the Muhlenberg Institute of Public Opinion in collaboration with the Gerald R. Ford

School of Public Policy at the University of Michigan in our own state reported a 54% support to 35% oppose margin for shale gas extraction. This is in spite of the fact that the word fracking had a negative perception for 45% of the respondents (31% reported a positive connotation.) In addition, majorities felt drilling for natural gas had provided more benefits so far (52%) and will continue to in the future (53%). Eighty-two percent (82%) saw drilling



for natural gas to be somewhat to very important to the overall condition of the Michigan economy.²

Other surveys, including another one conducted by the Muhlenberg Institute of Public Opinion and the Gerald R. Ford

School of Public Policy in 2011, found pluralities favoring fracking, even when there was a great deal of public distrust with sources of information (e.g., media, scientists) regarding the process. Forty-one percent (41%) of those polled said that so far fracking had provided more benefits than problems for Pennsylvania, and 33% said it has caused more problems. The survey also discovered that 50% expected more benefits than problems in the future, while 32% expect more problems.³

Yes, there were some survey results in the other direction, mostly at the state level, and often times countered by polling data conducted in similar time frames on the same targeted population but with opposite results. On the whole, fracking has had fair support from the public.

Now comes the best evidence yet of a sea change in the public's view of this method of mineral extraction. Findings by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press released last fall indicated a dramatic 15% point net swing in the public's view of fracking.⁴ Their results from September data gathering reported that 49% opposed the increased use of fracking compared to 44% in favor. The



opposition figure represented an 11-point increase since the previous poll in March 2013. The September support figure was a four-point decline.

OK, so what does this mean?

It primarily signals a growing opposition among Independents (+13 points since March 2013) and Republican (+12 points since March 2013) to hydro-fracturing. In fact, the single biggest net swing was 20 points for Republicans *away from fracking support*.

Regionally, opposition to fracking increased the greatest in our good old Midwest, from 32% in March to 48% just six months later. The net change was 24 points. Clearly, something must have happened over the summer?

While opposition to fracking increased in every single sub-group, usually by double digits, it's also important to note that 58% of Republicans still favor it – 63% for conservation Republicans – and the favor (45%)/oppose (49%) figures for Independents are within the statistical margin of error. The most stable sub-group was probably Democrats, and 33% favor fracking!

Sudden significant legislation in a conservation vein as a result of the findings is unlikely, but if these trends continue the sound of political flip-flopping in various legislatures might resemble the volatile weather of a Michigan spring.

- Thomas Buhr, Editor

(Ed. Note: I plan to delve more deeply into the various surveys out there concerning all salient aspects of conservation. We'll put up links to some of these reports on our website www.ausableanglers.org in the near future.)

¹ www.rasmussenreports.com/public_content/business/gas_oil/march_2012/57_favor_use_of_fracking_to_find_more_u_s_oil_and_gas

² Brown, E., Hartmen, K. Borick, C., Rabe, B.G., & Ivacko, T. (May 2013). "The National Surveys on Energy and Environment: Public Opinion on Fracking: Perspectives from Michigan and Pennsylvania," Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, University of Michigan. www.closup.umich.edu.

³ "Poll: Pennsylvania citizens doubt media, environmentalists, scientists, governor in 'fracking' debate," (2011). The Muhlenberg Institute of Public Opinion in collaboration with the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy at the University of Michigan, <http://closup.umich.edu>.

⁴ "Continued support for Keystone XL pipeline," (September 2013). Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. www.people-press.org



Trout Bigger continued...

ported) – attended one day of the shocking survey last fall and was amazed at the process:

“The most eye-opening aspect of the shocking was the strong presence of wild brown trout across all size ranges. It makes me wonder if there’s more we can do to foster the wild populations in this stretch.”

Steve Sendek first noticed the phenomenon of increasing numbers of wild browns after an October shocking survey of Perry Creek. Previous to that finding the popular notion, supported in the data, was that wild trout did not have very much success reproducing on the Big Water.

If wild fish are establishing a strong presence below Mio, it presents an interesting question for managing the fishery going forward. There has been no shortage of debate about that problem in the fly shops and drift boats for years.

Tim Cwalinski, Senior Fisheries Biologist, took over for Sendek in 2012. It is now his job to solve the riddle of this 22-mile long puzzle:

“By looking at our electro-fishing data over the last decade or more, it appears that overall brown trout numbers were a bit lower in the fall of 2013 compared to some years. Based on Mio to Meadow Springs brown trout estimates by DNR from the following years: 2001, 2002, 2005, 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2013; the mean number per acre of brown trout in those years was 35/acre, and it was 19/acre in 2013. Thus, brown trout numbers are clearly lower in 2013. Brown trout pounds/acre mean estimate



Senior Fisheries Biologist Tim Cwalinski with a Mio dandy.

for those years for the same reach was 13.3 lbs/acre, and the estimate was near that in 2013 at 11.4 lbs/acre.

Simply put, fewer numbers overall, but a few bigger fish in the estimate, especially in the 15-20 inch range certainly balanced the fishery out. This is fairly concurrent with what our anglers have been saying. This size range of fish may be traced back to a good year class around 2009 or 2010.

The survival of rainbow trout continues to be very low, especially when considering survival of rainbows from year to year. DNR and angler groups may have to re-evaluate this species specific stocking program.”

We will report findings for individual brown trout strains and the breakdown for age groups as the data become available.

- Art Thomas, Big Water Correspondent

Dear Tom:

I had a question regarding *The RIVERWATCH* magazine that I received recently in the mail. It is a pretty decent magazine, informative, but I did have a question. On page 8 (trout density and biomass graphs) it says the South Branch “has not recovered” and that “there is limited fish food here.”

Based on our DNR fisheries data which you provided, the pounds per acre of trout (brook and brown **combined**) as well as the number per acre over time (1973-2010) naturally fluctuate, as do all wild trout populations, based on the data from Smith Bridge only (900 ft station). I do understand that it is hard to extrapolate the entire fish community of the river based on one sampling site, so lets be

general about this.

In my opinion, there is less fluctuation in pounds per acre and number per mile at the South Branch (for both species combined) over this period if you eyeball the graph in *The RIVERWATCH* and you examine the two tables I have provided here. More importantly, the numbers at Smith Bridge are just as high in 2010 and in the recent decade as the glory days that the author discusses earlier, give or take an occasional outlier year or survey.

Lastly, is there limited food in this river based on DEQ invertebrate studies throughout the watershed, or is this based on anecdotal observation or the fact that the river has less stable flow?

Again, thanks for the informative magazine.

Summarized by Tim Cwalinski, DNR Fisheries Biologist, Gaylord

This 900 foot mark and recapture station is a fixed site under the status and trends sampling design. It is called the Smith Bridge site on the South Branch Au Sable River. The station starts just upstream of M-72 Bridge and pro-

ceeds upstream for 900 feet. DNR will again survey this station in 2014, only this time, more large woody debris will have been added to the station based on habitat work concluded in 2013.

Population data for a 900 foot reach of the South Branch Au Sable River at Smith Bridge, 1983-2010.

Brook trout population estimates by year at the 900 foot fixed site, South Branch Au Sable River Smith Bridge.

Year	No./acre	Pounds/acre	No./Mile	Length range	Age Range	Growth index(in)*
Oct 1983	476	14.3	3,686	2-9	0-2	-0.3
Oct 1984	531	15.6	4,109	2-10	0-2	-0.1
Oct 1985	310	13.2	2,399	2-12	0-3	-0.1
Sept 1987	494	15.8	3,828	2-9	0-2	+0.8
Sept 1988	457	14.1	3,539	2-10	0-2	+0.4
Oct 1989	263	9.3	2,034	2-11	0-3	-0.6
Oct 1990	240	8.0	1,860	2-9	0-2	+0.1
Oct 1991	153	4.8	1,182	2-10	0-2	-0.3
Oct 1992	320	8.1	2,480	2-8	0-1	+0.5
Oct 1993	307	10.5	2,378	2-8	0-2	0.0
Oct 1994	377	12.6	2,918	2-8	0-2	-0.1
Oct 1995	479	13.2	3,711	2-10	0-2	-0.3
Oct 1996	496	13.5	3,845	2-9	0-2	-0.3
Oct 1997	639	17.0	4,949	2-8	0-2	+0.2
Oct 1998	606	26.3	4,690	2-9	0-2	+0.1

To the Editor continued...

Year	No./acre	Pounds/acre	No./Mile	Length range	Age Range	Growth index(in)*
Oct 1999	744	20.9	5,759	2-10	0-3	0.0
Oct 2000	437	14.5	3,845	2-11	0-3	-0.6
Oct 2001	385	9.8	3,390	2-7	0-3	-0.3
Sept 2002	480	10.6	3,715	1-8	0-2	+0.3
Sept 2003	458	9.6	3,549	1-9	0-2	+0.8
Sept 2004	378	11.1	2,928	2-11	0-2	+0.7
Sept 2008	316	6.6	2,427	2-8	0-2	--
Sept 2009	394	11.5	3,031	2-10	0-2	+0.5
Sept 2010	505	8.2	3,880	1-9	0-1	+0.5
<i>AVG</i>	<i>427</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>3,338</i>			

*Growth index is the deviation from average statewide growth for that species.

Brown trout population estimates by year at the 900 foot fixed site, South Branch Au Sable River Smith Bridge.

Year	No./acre	Pounds/acre	No./Mile	Length range	Age Range	Growth index(in)*
Oct 1983	326	41.2	2,525	2-16	0-4	0.0
Oct 1984	337	42.3	2,613	2-16	0-5	0.0
Oct 1985	195	42.4	1,513	2-16	0-4	+0.3
Sept 1987	779	74.8	6,031	2-16	0-4	+1.4
Sept 1988	338	42.4	2,618	2-16	0-4	+1.0
Oct 1989	289	41.1	2,236	2-16	0-4	-0.1
Oct 1990	210	26.7	1,624	2-16	0-4	+0.3
Oct 1991	194	60.0	1,503	2-16	0-4	+0.3
Oct 1992	241	25.9	1,870	2-16	0-5	+0.8
Oct 1993	264	25.4	2,046	2-16	0-6	-0.1
Oct 1994	191	14.5	1,482	3-16	0-4	0.0
Oct 1995	300	23.1	2,324	2-16	0-4	+0.5
Oct 1996	153	12.9	1,181	2-13	0-3	+0.5
Oct 1997	143	17.4	1,105	2-16	0-4	+0.9
Oct 1998	182	14.4	1,410	2-16	0-4	-0.1
Oct 1999	422	31.9	3,265	2-16	0-4	+1.1
Oct 2000	323	30.4	2,846	2-16	0-4	+0.5
Oct 2001	273	27.6	2,406	2-16	0-4	+0.8
Sept 2002	409	42.6	3,171	2-17	0-4	+0.8
Sept 2003	527	32.3	4,085	2-14	0-4	+0.8
Sept 2004	256	31.4	1,979	2-16	0-3	+1.3
Sept 2008	399	41.3	3,068	2-17	0-4	+0.4

Year	No./acre	Pounds/acre	No./Mile	Length range	Age Range	Growth index(in)*
Sept 2009	252	22.3	1,938	2-20	0-5	+1.0
Sept 2010	419	30.6	3,221	2-20	0-5	+1.3
AVG	309	33	2419			

*Growth index is the deviation from average statewide growth for that species.

Population data for a 900 foot reach of the South Branch Au Sable River at Smith Bridge, 1983-2010.

I just had these couple thoughts while reading the newsletter; again, I think you guys did a good job and I

enjoyed reading it.

Sincerely

Tim Cwalinski, DNR Senior Fisheries Biologist

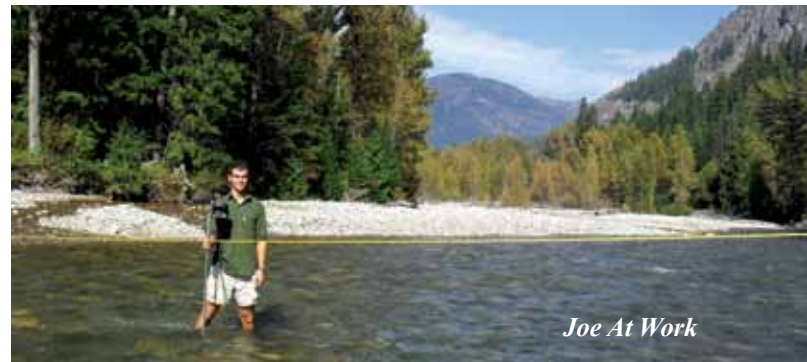
CATCHING UP WITH JOE!

(Editor's Note: We made sure to send our 2012 Scholarship recipients a copy of RIVERWATCH 67 and asked them to let us know what they have been up to lately. Here's Joe Parzych's response.)

Here's an update on what I've been up to:

Currently I am pursuing a Masters in stream ecology at Washington State University. I am a teaching assistant for Environmental Science 101, and have 2 lab sections that I am in charge of instructing (20 students per lab). As far as research, a proposal for funding that I helped write just got funded today through the State of Washington! The project will look at how logjam installations impact nutrient cycling, transient storage, and hyporheic (the interface between surface and ground waters) exchange. I will be conducting my research in the Methow River in the northern Cascades of Washington State.

Here's some context on the study: The Methow River is an oligotrophic river that has had diminishing returns of Chinook salmon and steelhead in recent history. The thought is that nutrients released from salmon carcasses into the stream after spawning help to enrich the food web and sustain juvenile salmon and steelhead over the win-



Joe At Work

ter months. Salmon and steelhead in the Methow may be caught in a vicious cycle of few spawners leading to low juvenile survival, leading to fewer spawners and so on.

The Yakima Nation will be experimentally adding salmon nutrients into a tributary of the Methow River to study how nutrient enrichment can impact the food web and ultimately juvenile salmon survival. I am interested in how logjams control the extent to which carcass addition enriches the food web and ultimately increases juvenile salmon and steelhead survival. This project is interesting to me because it will show how physical habitat characteristics control biological processes such as nutrient uptake, and the findings will be directly applicable to restoration projects throughout the state.

Thanks again for the scholarship last year, it really helped me get set up out in Washington. I've attached a picture of me working in the Methow River, as well as a fishing picture of a steelhead I caught on the Washougal River near Vancouver. I've managed to get out steelheading several times this year on the Grande Ronde and Washougal Rivers. Thanks for keeping in touch, my parents and I thoroughly enjoyed the article!

- Joe Parzych



RICHARD JAMES ENGER (JAMUS)

**FLY FISHERMAN, WRITER, RACONTEUR, DAD – PASSED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2013,
AFTER ALMOST 68 OUTSTANDING YEARS IN THE OUTDOORS AND ADVERTISING FIELDS.**

Flyfishing was just starting to accelerate in the public's consciousness in the early 70's when Jim opened "The Main Stream" – one of the first Orvis stores in the country. While not a resounding financial success, a cast of characters were forged together for a lifetime.

John Voelker affectionately referred to Jim as "Jamus, Jamus, Jamus." Both carried on quite a long personal and letter-writing relationship, John responding to Jim with his characteristic green pen and sprigs of cedar at Christmas. Jim and John (AKA Robert Traver, author of *Anatomy of a Murder*) met around 1974 with Jim delivering to John introductory peace offerings of 7x tippet and Italian Pierogi cigars, John reciprocated with jewels from his ethereal brook trout pond and the finest Old Fashioneds on the planet.

There exists a beautiful little rod, penciled on the shaft by Bob Summers, the "Jamus Fifty," given to him by his friends at a very long birthday party at Rome Café in Detroit in 1996. Seems like a long time ago, doesn't it.

Jim went on to work for the Detroit Automobile Dealers Association – DADA for short, in charge of resuscitating the Auto Show. And resuscitate he did. Jim started the turnaround for what it has become today including what some may remember the catchy jingle "It's the Talk of the Town," and Jim's idea to rebrand the show, the "North American International Auto Show." From these ideas of course, it has taken off, and Jim's award winning ad programs were nationally recognized for excellence.

It was during his time at DADA that we first met in his offices to discuss the possibility of forming Anglers of the Au Sable, to bring catch-and-release fishing to the Au Sable River. At the meeting were Rusty Gates, Jim, myself, Jim Schramm and others. "Can we do this?" was the question.

You know the results. Jim fought hard along with Rusty's leadership. He wrote numerous articles in *Fly Fisherman* magazine and others, vigorously promoting catch-and-release as an effective program to solve the system-wide decline in the trout population and average size. Incredibly, national Trout Unlimited opposed us, brought in nationally known trout experts to testify against catch-and-release on the Au Sable – de-

spite it's already proven effectiveness on our Western Rivers. Well, with all the member's dedication, we prevailed, barely. But look at the results, a smashing success by anyone's estimation and one the state of Michigan is emulating throughout the state, even for bass, for goodness sake. Which is why the Anglers of the Au Sable became instantly the largest chapter of the Federation of Fly Fisherman, because the TU would not support us and actually campaigned against us.

Somewhere along the way, Jim became Marketing & Advertising Director for a 250 person CPA firm, Doeren Mayhew & Co. Can you imagine Jim, the Director of marketing for a CPA firm? It was hilarious, I'll tell you. But he started a professional program continuing to this day.

An important part of the local Michigan community, Kirtland Community College brought Jim on board as Director of Marketing to assist with enrollment. Assist he did. During Jim's time, enrollment numbers reached all-time highs, as his broad-based awareness programs brought in students from as far away as the Bahamas.

An outstanding informational and conservation program speaker, Jim was the prime mover for the Kirtland's Warblers Festival sponsored by the college of the same name. The festival featured background and information regarding this little bird in Michigan, along with a fishing program for kids in the college's pond and conservation seminars throughout the weekend. Tremendous national awareness resulted to both the college and the bird.

Jamus retired from the college a few years ago, but continued working with the Michigan DNR for his beloved little Kirtland's Warbler. Well crafted, and one of the funniest fly-fishing books ever, many of Jim's short stories from the "Incomplete Angler," a book he authored in the 80's, has been included in numerous subsequent anthologies.

Well, Jim has "Completed" his angling, devoted to the outdoors, writing, family and friends. Jim's loving son Jeff, and beautiful daughters Sally and Christine, his Mom, Lillian, and sisters Judy, Nancy and Janie, and families and long list of loyal friends, for Jim was a gifted listener, will miss him greatly for a life well lived.

- Pete Treboldi not another drop of "bourbon from a tin cup" to be shared. I dearly miss him.

(Editor's Note: This first appeared on the website of The Old Au Sable Fly Shop and was circulated via email to thousands of folks. Jim Enger was the first editor of The RIVERWATCH [numbers 1 and 2] to read his work go to the RIVERWATCH Archives section of the Anglers' website.)

DNR ANNOUNCES NEW GRANT PROGRAM TO IMPROVE AQUATIC HABITAT

The Department of Natural Resources has announced its new Aquatic Habitat Grant Program that is focused on funding projects that protect intact and rehabilitate degraded aquatic habitat.

This new \$1 million grant program will emphasize protecting intact and rehabilitating degraded aquatic resources throughout the state; developing self-sustaining aquatic communities that provide for continuing recreational opportunities and natural resource-based economies; and developing strong relationships and partnerships along with new expertise with respect to aquatic habitat protection and recovery.

“This program will work to increase fish and aquatic wildlife populations statewide by ensuring our best waters remain so and improving aquatic habitat that is currently degraded,” said Gary Whelan, DNR Fisheries Division program manager. “It will also serve to increase direct public involvement in watershed issues and increase availability of high-quality, self-sustaining aquatic resources.”

Funding is available for eligible single- and multiple-year projects by local, state, federal and tribal governments,

nonprofit groups and individuals through an open competitive process. Minimum grant amounts will be set at \$25,000, with the maximum amount being the amount of funds available for that grant cycle. Projects can address issues on rivers, lakes or the Great Lakes. Smaller projects within the same watershed addressing similar issues and system processes can be bundled into a single grant proposal package in order to reach minimum grant amount requirements.

“This is a very exciting program that will continue to enhance Michigan’s world-class fisheries – which you can’t have without great aquatic habitat,” said DNR Fisheries Division Chief Jim Dexter. “We look forward to seeing projects of various scope and size that will impact all types of aquatic habitat.”

The Aquatic Habitat Grant Program application period will begin on Feb. 1 and will end at the close of business on March 15. Successful grant applications will be announced by April 15. This new grant program will be funded by new revenues from the increased fishing and hunting license fees. The detailed program handbook and application are available at www.michigan.gov/fishing or www.michigan.gov/dnr-grants.

- Chris Freiburger, Gary Whelan, Kelly Parker, Ed Golder, Michigan Department of Natural Resources

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

From time to time *The RIVERWATCH* receives letters from members about a wide range of subjects. In my time as editor I have published every one of them to my best recollection. I encourage anyone to send a letter about any subject related to the Au Sable, fishing, conservation, bird hunting or the outdoors. It will get published, but there are some guidelines for submissions of letters or any type of article. They are as follows:

1. We will correct for typos, grammar and inappropriate language.
2. Profanity, vulgar language or slanderous statements will be excised if the piece is accepted at all. We will fact check any information presented as such.
3. We'd prefer that letters or articles not exceed 1000 words, but if you check with us first we may be able to wave this restriction if space allows.

4. Letters or op-eds do not have to agree with the official positions of Anglers of the Au Sable, but responses to diverging opinions are likely to be presented as well.
5. You may submit as many pieces as you wish. Hard copy or email is fine.
6. Photos are welcome as well.

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CALENDAR - WINTER 2014

***February 22, 2014 - Anglers' Board
Meeting Room, 10 a.m.***

***March 8th and 9th - MFFC Fly Fishing
Expo, Warren, MI***

Our organization is officially affiliated with the Federation of Fly Fishers (FFF). We strongly encourage you to join the FFF. Since 1965, FFF and its Councils have been and continue to be the only organized national and regional advocates for fly fishing. Five dollars of your FFF dues are returned to the FFF Great Lakes Council (GLC) to be used for local efforts.

FEDERATION OF
FLY FISHERS



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