



Heather Seites, a DNR creel clerk stationed in the Frankfort/Elberta area, weighs a lake trout caught by an angler in July in Lake Michigan. Creel clerks gather important fishing data for the DNR for use in fisheries management decisions. (DNR photograph by David Kenyon)

## Creel Clerks Provide Valuable Fisheries Data

It wasn't a good day at Heather Seites' "office." It was very windy and there was a storm brewing over Lake Michigan, and that meant there were few anglers out fishing on this July day.

Ms. Seites' office is a public marina in picturesque Frankfort on Lake Michigan. She takes up her post near the fish cleaning station, waiting for anglers to come in off the lake so she can ask them a few questions and count, weigh, and measure their catch.

Ms. Seites is a Department of Natural Resources creel clerk, and she's responsible for collecting data from recreational anglers in the Frankfort/Elberta area in the northwest Lower Peninsula. She monitors the municipal marina and other locations in Frankfort and a private marina across the channel in Elberta, talking to anglers, collecting data about the fish they caught or the fish they intentionally released.

The objective of the program is to obtain a continuous record of sport catch, catch rates, and catch composition for the Great Lakes and important river fisheries. Coupled with fish marking studies, the data obtained by creel clerks identify Great Lakes and anadromous fish stocks and determine their distribution, movements, and contribution to various sport fisheries.

Angler surveys are conducted annually on selected waters of the Great Lakes, and have been since 1983. The DNR uses the data collected by Ms. Seites and the other 40 creel clerks positioned on Great Lakes sites and inland lakes around the state to evaluate the health of fish populations and to determine if changes in regulations, stocking, or other management actions are warranted.



For Ms. Seites, 24, being a creel clerk is an entry level position in her career in fish and wildlife management. She has a degree in fish and wildlife management from Lake Superior State University, and this is her third year as a creel clerk. Creel clerks work from about mid-March to early November in most parts of the state. In some parts of the state, they will collect data during ice fishing season as well.

Every year, DNR creel clerks will survey between 50,000 and 75,000 anglers. Most of those will be surveyed in the spring, summer, and fall months, but about 25 percent are interviewed during the ice fishing season. Anglers are surveyed on all the Great Lakes. On Lake Michigan, creel clerks are stationed from New Buffalo to Harbor Springs. The entire angling day, from dawn to one hour past dusk, is covered.

"The creel survey program is a vital, core process of fisheries management," said Kelley Smith, chief of the DNR Fisheries Division. "To understand what is happening with fish populations and with fishing each year, we must at least have knowledge of the number of fish harvested, how long it takes anglers to harvest these fish, and basic data on the overall health of the fish.

"Biological information, including at a minimum samples of scales or other bony structures for aging the fish, length, and weight are the most important factors we need to manage fish in the

State's lakes and rivers. Without the creel survey program, these most basic parameters describing fish health and survival would be unavailable to us," Ms. Smith added.

Every day, Ms. Seites performs two counts, walking the piers to determine how many boats are going out and how many anglers are out fishing on the piers or from shore. She also conducts many short interviews, asking anglers how many fish they caught, how many they released, and then collects data from harvested fish, such as weight and length. Every month, she also collects a certain number of biological samples from the fish, usually some of its scales so DNR fisheries staff can age the fish.

She talks to anglers actively fishing at piers and who come back into the marinas on boats. She only talks to anglers who are fishing in Lake Michigan, and not in the channel leading out to the lake.

In the brief interview, she collects data from the anglers, asking them how far they came to fish that day, how long they were out fishing, what fish they were trying to catch, how many fish they caught, and how many they released. In July, she collected biological data from 20 king salmon and 30 lake trout. In August, she will collect biological data from 40 Coho salmon and 60 king salmon. She weighs each fish, measures it, checks the fish for lamprey scars or external DNR tags, and then collects a sample of its scales if she needs them for her monthly quota. She enters the information into

\*Please turn to page 13

## Michigan Politics

By George Weeks



## Intra-Party Discord Erupts on High Court

What has long been simmering among Republicans on the Michigan Supreme Court is beginning to erupt.

It was no surprise when independent-minded Justice Betty Weaver yet again recently dissented from majority opinions issued by the four other Republicans on the seven-member high court.

She, in fact, wrote the dissent, concurred in by the two Democratic justices, to the Friday ruling that reversed lower court rulings on a budget dispute involving the 46th Circuit Court, which serves Crawford, Kalkaska, and Otsego counties.

On an earlier, more significant recent case to those of us who favor the bright light of public scrutiny on spending of public bodies, Weaver commendably was in the minority of the 4-3 decision that permitted Eastern Michigan University to keep secret portions of a document on the construction of a multi-million home for EMU's president.

It's not unusual to have testy exchanges among justices within opinions issued by the U.S. or state supreme courts. There's a lot of such sniping in Washington these days.

But rare is published internal sniping on routine court orders, as opposed to thrashed-out opinions.

It was extraordinary last week when the Michigan Supreme Court issued five pages on what, under normal circumstances, would have been a routine one-line order appointing Chief 17th District Circuit Judge Paul Sullivan to also fill a vacancy as chief judge of the Kent County Probate Court. Such appointments usually are issued without a peep beyond the locality.

Weaver, herself a former Leelanau County Probate Judge, wrote a dissent complaining that appointing a circuit judge — one without probate experience — as chief judge of a probate court was "unjustified and publicly unexplained."

She advanced a case for another candidate — one unanimously recommended by Kent probate judges and supported by the two Democratic justices. The majority, she said, "denied Kent County the leadership it deserves on its probate court."

My interest here is not in merit of the appointment but in how the spat over it may telegraph more internal strife to come — a tip of the iceberg of the GOP Court Chill.

Supreme Court Public Information Officer Marcia McBrien

said what happened on the Kent County order "was beyond unusual: It was unprecedented."

Chief Justice Cliff Taylor, who said he routinely chooses chief judges "roughly 260 times biennially," opined: "Justice Weaver should not resent her colleagues for simply seeing things differently than she does."

He rejected her "peculiar invitation to accept responsibility for the publication of the various matters in her statement."

Justice Robert P. Young Jr. wrote that Weaver, in citing "the presumed" reasons that her choice for the appointment was not picked, "has injured our institutional interest in preserving the dignity of people who unsuccessfully seek appointments by this Court."

Chief Justice Taylor and ex-Chief Justice Weaver ("ex" because Taylor and GOP colleagues eased her out), as expected, declined comment beyond their zingers in the order.

Fellowship does not exist between Weaver and fellow Republicans on Michigan's splintered top bench.

Meanwhile, Weaver presses on with her idea of including term limits on Supreme Court justices in an revised term limits proposal that the Legislature advances to the ballot. There's not much steam right now behind the proposal, but Senator Michelle McManus (R-Lake Leelanau) says she has drafted language to push the Weaver idea when the time is right.

At one point, Weaver, who was elected to the Supreme Court and now has a term that doesn't expire until 2011, said she would leave the court last October. GOP lawmakers, concerned that this would allow Democratic Governor Jennifer Granholm to appoint Weaver's replacement, started paying more favorable attention to her commendable ideas for court reform.

Right now, the attention she is getting from the other four Republicans on the Michigan Supreme Court is far from favorable.

### Watershed Meeting

In early July, Republican gubernatorial candidate Dick DeVos met for about 90 minutes with former Governor Bill Milliken at the

Milliken residence on Grand Traverse Bay in Traverse City.

Milliken, who differs with DeVos on numerous issues, says they established good rapport but has been mum about specifics. However, at a dinner party last week at the Empire-area Lake Michigan cottage of ex-Oakland County Circuit Judge David Breck, Milliken revealed this:

As DeVos walked toward the vehicle that he drove to Milliken's, the ex-governor's outdoor automatic sprinkler system along the path from the house to the parking area kicked in with a blast.

Milliken said DeVos, dressed in a dark suit, left "absolutely drenched" but in gracious good spirits.

### Granholm's Google Ad

When Granholm announced that Google Inc. will invest up to \$50 million for an Ann Arbor-area facility that will have 1,000 workers, among those speaking at the ceremony was Bill Milliken Jr., chairman of the Washtenaw County Development Council.

Subsequently, her office told the ex-governor's son that the Michigan Democratic Party, in its campaign TV spot touting the state's coup, wanted to include a brief visual of him speaking. He said that could be misleading because he was there only as an economic development advocate.

Nonetheless, at the end of the ad, there is a momentary — almost a flash — close-up image of Granholm and Milliken together.

As of Saturday, he had not seen the ad, but said he intends to "keep my head down" and out of gubernatorial politics, especially in view of his father's current neutrality in this year's race.

Although Milliken, who owns a real estate company, is not widely recognizable, did the Democratic Party hope for some subliminal message for those who will recognize him?

"No," insists party spokesman Jason Moon. "He was just there."

Sure.

George Weeks recently retired after 22 years as political columnist for *The Detroit News*. His weekly *Michigan Politics* column is syndicated by *Superior Features*.

## Coast Guard Makes Grand Marais Rescue

Coast Guard Station North Superior rescued 23 people from the water of Grand Marais Harbor after the giant canoe in which they were riding capsized Saturday, July 29. There are no reports of injury.

A witness to the accident went to the Coast Guard station and North Superior personnel launched their 30-foot rescue boat to pull the people out of the water and transport them safely to shore.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### County Employees Complimented for Road Work

To the Editor:

The recently completed Pte. Brulee Road project has been a challenging job. A road that leads

south from M-134, west of Hessel, where Steele Creek crosses and starts at Morgan Springs, drains a huge area, with spring run-off. Water used to rise above the road, climbing as high as two feet. And frost, when leaving the ground, was like driving on chewing gum.

On hearing that Mackinac County Road Commission had just completed tar and chipping Pte. Brulee, and being a member of our local road committee, I wanted to see what our voted road millage had accomplished.

Riding with me was a man that has worked with companies that specialize in road building, and I highly respect his opinion.

I noticed the well-crowned road and the smooth surface. No water was going to lay on this road, nor ice during cold weather. There are drainage ditches, and water can

now get to the ditches.

I thought to myself, "This is a beautiful road." My passenger said, "They did a beautiful job."

"Yes," I said. "I give them an A-plus."

Whether you know it or not, Mackinac County road employees are improving their skills. Running equipment like a grader takes many hours of hands-on experience.

Pte. Brulee Road is by far the best road ever built by our County in Clark Township.

To our many Mackinac County Road employees, as this is a team effort from the top to the bottom. I commend you for such a beautiful road.

Bud Mathews,  
Clark Township Road  
Committee  
Hessel

### Apologies for Canceling Festival

To the Editor:

On behalf of the Les Cheneaux Area Artisan Cooperative (LCAAC), I would like to apologize for having to cancel our Third Annual Music and Art Dockside Festival, and for being unable to reschedule it. Severe winds caused damage that made it impossible to hold the event Sunday, July 16, and short notice made it difficult to find a date to

re-book musicians and food vendors. We are already looking into plans for next summer so that we have back-up plans in case of bad weather.

If you want to help or share ideas, please contact me or any of our board members, or visit us at Art in the Park in Cedarville on Labor Day weekend.

Rick Shapero  
Cedarville

## The St. Ignace News

and Les Cheneaux Islands Weekly Wave

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The quotation under the flag of *The St. Ignace News* on Page 1 is from the 10 triads written by Dr. Fred Newton Scott, creator and teacher of the first continuous course in journalism in the United States at the University of Michigan in 1890. The 10 triads are chiseled on the parapet of the Detroit News Building at 615 Lafayette Boulevard, Detroit. They were headed "Ideals of the Press" or "The Newspaper in a Free Society," and serve as a reminder of what a free press means to us.

## St. Ignace News Policies

### Letters:

All responsible letters will be considered for publication and may be edited. They must be signed and a telephone number must be included for verification. Personal thank-you notes, personal attacks against other people, form letters, and letters promoting political candidates are not accepted, although letters for or against ballot proposals are welcome.

### Obituaries:

The St. Ignace News maintains a policy of not charging for obituaries and we sometimes add information or rewrite them for clarity and reader interest. Obituaries that the family wants published exactly as submitted can be placed in the newspaper for \$75. Photographs are welcome at no charge.

### Weddings:

Weddings with photographs are published without charge within 45 days of the ceremony. After 45 days, a photograph can be included for \$32.80.

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