

Five Options on the Table To Fix Bird Problem Near Airport

Airport: From page 1

Huron, Mr. Casey said, but to save money when lagoon bids came in over budget, the city sought and received Water Resources Commission approval to set the outfall at the edge of the lake. Doing so was estimated to save about \$400,000 for a treatment project, according to a *St. Ignace News* report of a March 2, 1987 city council meeting.

The Michigan Bureau of Aeronautics, Mackinac County, and the airport can find no documents indicating they were notified of the engineering change, said Mr. Fullerton.

"Nobody can find any communication whatsoever," he said, "that we were involved in approving this being dumped on the beach right at the end of the runway."

Now, to extend the pipe out to a depth of 24 feet would cost about \$3.5 million, said Mr. Hauser.

"That clearly borders on unaffordable for a town like St. Ignace," he said.

By comparison, said Mr. Therian, a \$1.4 million loan equals about a \$90,000 annual payment over 20 years.

The purpose of Wednesday's meeting was to solicit DEQ opinions on the various suggested corrections and discuss their affordability, said Mr. Hauser. Options include doing nothing, extending the outflow pipe into Lake Huron, relocating the pipe further to the north, cooling the effluent, discharging the effluent into a deep injection well, or establishing a surface discharge system.

To do nothing, he said, is not a viable alternative because of safety concerns at the airport.

Extending the pipe out into the Lake Huron would be possible if the length is reduced and the pipe is not set so deep into the lake bed.

The depth is needed to avoid ice scour, said Mr. Casey. Ice can damage the pipe and even break it apart. Mackinac Island has an outfall pipe under the water. In the mid-1980s during sewer system work on the Island, a diver inspected the pipe and found it in pieces that were scattered all over, he said.

A trench would have to be dug under the water and the pipe placed in it for protection against winter ice. Shortening the length of the pipe, he said, would not solve the problem, as the warm discharge still would warm the water and draw birds near the flight area.

Another option would be to move the outfall further north, said Mr. Hauser, although it cannot be moved north far enough to eliminate the bird issue, and moving it closer to homes has the potential to create odor problems for residents.

The effluent could be cooled before it is discharged, which would eliminate having to move or lengthen the pipe. While technically feasible, said Mr. Hauser, the system would be very expensive. Those attending agreed it was not an option to consider.

A groundwater discharge using a deep injection well was discussed as an option. Mr. Casey said he is not aware of any municipality receiving a permit for a deep injection well in the state. Concerns also were for energy costs incurred to operate a pump.

Discussion quickly changed to the consideration of surface discharge on the wetlands north of the airport. The site covers about 30 acres, where the effluent would have some ground seepage and likely travel to Hoban Creek. Mr. Casey advised that permits for that plan may be difficult to get, although he suggested they should apply for consideration.

The DEQ would have to determine the effluent limits of the area, he said.

"We would not allow you to use a wetland as a treatment system," he said. "You can't take a natural wetland and discharge sewage that would in any way impair the existing function" of the wetland.

The idea of constructing seepage beds met with favorable reviews and could be on land north of the wastewater treatment facility, next to the airport. The land is owned by the county and an agreement would be required for the city to use the site.

Getting a groundwater discharge permit probably would be possible, said Mr. Conroy, if a covenant was

placed on it restricting groundwater use in the area.

During peak use of the sewer system during a short period in the summer, Mr. Casey said, the city could revert back to the outfall pipe temporarily.

"I don't think you have to solve the problem 365 days a year," he said.

Mr. Hauser said URS now will look at volumes of discharge, the direction of the flow, developing a monitoring well network, and deter-

mining the geology of the land.

The cost to construct the seepage beds will be determined after research is complete.

For financing, Mr. Casey suggested the city contact the State Revolving Fund to see if this project could be added to the city's sewer project already in the program.

Mr. Fullerton said the Federal Aviation Administration has indicated to him that it will not help with funding.

Northern Michigan News Roundup

The news in brief from communities around the U.P. and northern Michigan

Compiled using information published in various community newspapers.

U.P.'s Cordwood Ministry Going Strong

The St. Vincent de Paul conference in Stephenson keeps a supply of firewood on hand to distribute to needy people in the area who can't afford firewood to heat their homes. The "cordwood ministry" began in the winter of 2005 when a local deacon learned of a man who had no heat in his home, and delivered a truckload of wood to him. Since then, the conference keeps a supply on hand for use in such emergencies, and distributed about eight cords of wood in the community last winter.

At first, the council paid for the wood, but then "Firewood Sunday" was established at the parish, when people were invited to donate wood for the ministry.

Community support for the program is strong, the conference reports.

— *The U.P. Catholic*

More People Turning to Trucking Jobs, U.P. Companies Report

A nationwide trend is reflected locally as more and more jobless people are turning toward a career on the road. According to Upper Peninsula trucking companies and truck-driving schools, the number of people entering the field has increased dramatically since last year.

At St. Jacques Transportation Services of Escanaba, the number of people interested in driving has tripled since last year, and some of them have recently been laid off from another job.

A job driving for St. Jacques Transportation Services requires three years of professional time behind the wheel, however, bigger trucking companies do recruit people directly out of driving school, which is why unemployed people with no experience are turning to the industry.

MidWest Truck Driving School of Escanaba is booked with students until May, and 75% of those enrolled at the school enrolled after being laid off, the company reported.

— *The Mining Journal*

Harvesting Energy From U.P. Forests Sparks 'Overwhelming Interest' at Marquette

Bioenergy and renewable energy will change the way people think about energy and forests, people were told at a workshop in Marquette March 10. Concerns about energy are prompted by the instability of supply, rising costs, global competition, and climate change.

Bill Cook of MSU Extension in Escanaba told attendees that energy consumption will rise and fossil fuel supplies are limited; now, 87% of Michigan's energy use comes from fossil fuels. Oil is used mostly in Michigan, he said, while coal is nationally the top fossil fuel used.

Solutions to the dependency on fossil fuels, he said, are using less energy and turning more toward wood or other renewable resources. Using renewables or woody biomass would also reduce carbon emissions, help the economy, and improve energy efficiency, Mr. Cook said, calling coal "incredibly inefficient." In a coal-burning plant, up to 70% of energy produced is lost and goes out the smokestack.

Wood, plentiful in the Upper Peninsula, could play a big part in new combined heat and power plants.

Michigan grows about 26 million cubic meters of wood each year; and 1 million cubic meters of wood could produce 50 million gallons ethanol and electricity for half a million homes, he said.

With renewable energy and sustainability also comes a shift in thinking, Mr. Cook said, from a mind-set of consumption to one of using local resources and paying attention to consequences of energy use.

— *The Mining Journal*

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 do often 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 \$35.00.

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Michigan Politics

By
George Weeks



State Wetlands Thrown into Federal Swamp?

Yet another threat looms to landmark environmental protection legislation Michigan enacted decades ago to raves beyond our borders.

The latest threat is that Governor Jennifer Granholm wants to abolish Michigan's 1979 Wetland Protection Act and transfer wetland conservation permitting and enforcement to the federal government.

The proposal is "foolish and destructive," says Dave Dempsey, environmental adviser to 1983-90 Democratic Governor James J. Blanchard; former policy director for the Michigan Environmental Council, and a member of Granholm's 2002 transition team. "Improvements to the state's program are always possible, but ending it is a monumental mistake."

Indeed it is. Upon reading those Dempsey comments in a letter to the Charlevoix-based *North Woods Call*, I called him in Minnesota, where he is communications director for Conservation Minnesota while remaining active in Michigan environmental issues.

Among Dempsey's several superb books is "Ruin and Recovery: Michigan's Rise as a Conservation Leader." So I asked: "Is Michigan still rising, or falling?" He said: "Michigan has stumbled into the woods and can't find its way out" — and lacks strong conservation leadership.

But he is encouraged by the environmental credentials of some legislators, including such new members as Representative Dan Scripps (R-Leland).

Granholm, as part of her State of the State Address emphasis on the need to cut state spending, recommended "returning enforcement of wetlands protections to the federal government, where more staff exists to effectively safeguard our natural resources."

But Bill Murphy of the Michigan Resource Stewards, a group of retired conservation professionals who bring considerable wisdom to contemporary issues, wrote in the *North Woods Call*:

"Those of us who are familiar with the day-to-day realities of the ability of federal agencies to manage programs such as this know that the end result will unquestionably be a reduction in wetlands protection, a much longer timetable for permit processing, and the end of the ability for Michigan residents to contact a local official with whom they can meet to resolve issues or obtain answers to complex questions."

There is this from 1969-82 Republican Governor William G. Milliken, the Michigan Environmental Protection Act champion who signed the wetland act into law in 1979:

"This law, 30 years after its passage, remains a national model. Federal agencies simply do not have the authority nor the funding to administer adequately the protection of Michigan wetlands. Repeal of the law would be a huge setback to this and future generations."

Granholm, like Milliken and other governors before her, must cut to balance the books and will face

criticism with each cut. This one is estimated to save about \$2 million.

The Michigan Resource Stewards contend the result will be "a negative impact on economic development initiatives, the loss of which will cost far more than any short-term savings gained by its elimination."

This is not just environmentalist bleating. There also are concerns in the business community that putting wetland regulation under federal jurisdiction would lead to further delays in getting permits.

Senator Jason Allen (R-Traverse City), chairman of the Senate Commerce and Tourism Committee, said he has been hearing increasing concerns on this point. He said, "It's potentially a real problem."

It was a stunning setback in 2007 when the so-called Engler Majority of Four on the seven-member Michigan Supreme Court dismantled the Michigan Environmental Protection Act (MEPA). It did so in a 4-3 vote to reverse a Court of Appeals ruling that had given standing in a dispute with the Nestle Waters Ice Mountain bottling operation in Mecosta County to certain citizens under MEPA.

The fifth Republican on the court, Betty Weaver, called it "a tragic day for Michigan" and dissented from the decision "because the Michigan Constitution does not restrict the ability of the Legislature to grant standing to the citizens of the state" even if they are not directly impacted by an event.

There could be good news on this front. Traverse City attorney Jim Olson, who represents Michigan Citizens for Water Conservation in its ongoing Mecosta battle, says there are at least two other outstanding cases with standing issues that may reach the Supreme Court.

It's a good bet that the high court, which now has three Democrats, would rule 4-3 to restore original rights of citizens to fill challenges under MEAP.

Soo Locks

Last week, Allen held a hearing on the shipping locks at Sault Ste. Marie and introduced a resolution urging Congress and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers "to fund fully" the building of a new lock.

The Lake Carriers Association said that if the 40-year-old Poe Lock were to become unusable, 70% of the current cargo would not be able to pass through the locks.

The budget signed last week by President Barack Obama included a \$17 million earmark requested by Senators Carl Levin and Debbie Stabenow and Representative Bart Stupak (D-Menominee) for work on a new lock.

Although Allen called it "a good step," his resolution urges full funding for the \$480 million project that was first authorized in 1986.

"A new Poe-sized lock is shovel ready and would generate thousands of needed jobs and nearly \$500 million in economic activity," he said.

George Weeks retired in 2006 after 22 years as political columnist for The Detroit News. His weekly Michigan Politics column is syndicated by Superior Features.

Roach Pleads Guilty to Manslaughter

Roy Roach, 21, of St. Ignace, pled guilty Friday, March 6, to the charge of second degree manslaughter for the October 29 shooting death of Seth Tamlyn, also of St. Ignace.

Mr. Roach is scheduled to be sentenced at 2:30 p.m. Thursday, April 23, in 11th Circuit Court in St. Ignace.

The charge of manslaughter death by weapon with intent (without malice) carries a penalty of up to 15 years in prison. Mackinac County Prosecutor Fred Feleppa added that a minimum sentence would be between 36 and 71 months.

Mr. Roach was released on a tether bond in November, but returned to custody of the Mackinac County Sheriff after Friday's pre-trial hearing.

The three other counts against Mr. Roach were dropped. They were homicide-murder; being under the influence of alcohol, felony firearms; use/ discharge of a firearms weapon under the influence of alcohol or drugs, causing death.

Les Cheneaux School Board Meets Friday

The Les Cheneaux Community Schools Board of Education monthly meeting is rescheduled for Friday, March 20, at 7 p.m. in the Cedarville High School library. District Superintendent Rod Goehmann said the rescheduling from Monday, March 16, is owing to board trustee scheduling conflicts.

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.