

Practice Dive Reveals Older Fish Cribs in Use at Brevort Lake

By Jonathan Eppley

Six members of the Michigan State Police Underwater Recovery Unit hauled diving equipment out onto the ice of Brevort Lake Tuesday, March 24, for a monthly training exercise. While diving under the 32 inches of ice on the lake, the diving unit also captured video footage of old fish cribs for the Straits Area Sportsmen's Club and found they are serving their intended purpose to improve fish habitat.

Club member Jimmie Miller said the club wanted to know the condition of some of the older fish cribs in the lake and asked if the diving unit could accommodate the request when performing its monthly training exercise.

"It started out as just a way to see the condition of the cribs and to see how they are progressing over time," he said.

Over the last 25 years, the sportsmen's club has built 104 log cribs, which act as artificial habitats, providing shelter from predators for smaller fish. Twenty more cribs are sitting on the ice, about three miles southeast of the dive site, waiting to sink to the bottom of the lake when the ice melts.

The diving unit tries to assist agencies such as the sportsmen's club when performing training exercises, said trooper and divemaster Craig Dorenbecker of the St. Ignace police post.

"If we can train with a purpose that would help an agency, we would rather do that than just train on our own," he said.

While diving, Mr. Dorenbecker carried an underwater digital video camera to collect footage of the old fish cribs. The thickness of the ice, however, made it very dark underwater. Even with a flashlight, he said, it was difficult to see.

"The water clarity kind of surprised me. The thickness of the ice just saturated the water," he



Michigan State Police Trooper Dave Jackson hands Trooper Craig Dorenbecker an underwater digital video camera. The State Police Underwater Recovery Unit captured footage of old fish cribs in Brevort Lake for the Straits Area Sportsmen's Club during a training exercise Tuesday, March 24.

said. "I basically couldn't see anything."

Looking at the cribs, Mr. Dorenbecker saw rock bass and crayfish swimming in them, and zebra mussels had attached themselves to pine trees in the middle of the cribs.

Only three of the troopers, Mr. Dorenbecker, Jim Bush of the Gaylord post, and Dave Jackson of the Alpena post, actually dove on the fish cribs.

They each wore an insulating layer under a rubber dry-suit to keep warm and dry under the ice. Trooper Andy Carriveau of the Manistee post said the insulating layer and dry-suits will keep them warm for about 45 minutes in 35-

degree waters. The water temperature in Brevort Lake Tuesday was 33 degrees.

While underwater, Mr. Dorenbecker was in constant contact with the troopers above the ice through a radio intercom built into his diving mask.

The remaining troopers, Shawn Wise from the Kalkaska post, Clint Michelin of the Munising post, and Mr. Carriveau, remained on top of the ice monitoring the radio intercom and securing the safety line attached to the diver below. The troopers will rotate monthly exercise duties to stay proficient in every aspect of the dives.

The team usually dives in shifts, Mr. Carriveau said, especially in the winter months. One will dive while another warms up in a heated portable ice shanty, making sure ice doesn't form on the diving equipment.

The diving unit, which is made



Michigan State Police Trooper Clint Michelin helps Trooper Craig Dorenbecker into the water at Brevort Lake.

up of trained and certified divers and divemasters, mostly dives for investigations, body recovery, and recovery of various items, such as evidence collection in ongoing stolen property thrown into the

water. It's not very often the troopers are involved in search and rescue dives, Mr. Dorenbecker said. Those types of dives are typically left to local diving units able to respond quicker, he said. Members of the diving unit are trained in ice water rescue, though.

"The bulk of our dives are recovery," he said. Members of the diving unit also dive each spring to examine the hulls of Coast Guard ice cutters for damage.

There are about 20 diving unit troopers spread throughout the state, with four stationed in the U.P. and five in northern lower Michigan.

This is the third time in three years that members of the diving unit have performed training exercises on Brevort Lake. The sportsmen's club plans to show the video footage to club members and possibly to other clubs with similar projects, Mr. Miller said, to show the progress of the fish cribs project in Brevort Lake.

"If we can train with a purpose that would help an agency, we would rather do that than just train on our own."

— Craig Dorenbecker, divemaster

Staff Slated for Layoffs Named at Cedarville

The following Les Cheneaux Community Schools teachers and support staff received layoff notices Tuesday, March 24: Betty Struble, part-time elementary music; Carrie Carr, third grade; Christy Cloud, middle school science; Ryan Wilson, middle school language arts; Kim Thompson, food services; Jackie Malkowski, food services; Melenie Haske, teacher aide, and Meri Dresbach, teacher aide.

Food services worker Lorie Thompson and Native American

Coordinator Renee Hamel also received notice of reduction from full to part-time status.

The decision to issue layoff notices was part of an effort to balance next year's school budget. The decision was reported in *The St. Ignace News* March 26.

Teachers will remain on the job this spring and layoffs will become effective before the start of the fall semester. Under contract, the district must give teachers 60 days notice of layoff. Support staff, however, require only 10 days

notice.

Cedarville High School will be graduating 36 seniors this year, and the elementary school will be welcoming 17 students next fall, reducing the total student enrollment by 19, down to 292.

Projected student enrollment for each grade in the 2009/10 school year is as follows: kindergarten, 17 students; first grade, 18; second, 20; third, 25; fourth, 13; fifth, 26; sixth, 17; seventh, 25; eighth, 26; ninth, 34; 10th, 18; 11th, 38; and 12th, 15.

Great Lakes Shipping Opens for Season

The Soo Locks in Sault Ste. Marie opened Wednesday, March 25, marking the beginning of the Great Lakes shipping season.

The 450-foot Canadian tanker *M.T. Algosar* was the first ship to clear the Poe Lock at 5:15 p.m. Windy weather delayed the *Algosar*, which was upbound carrying fuel oil to Thunder Bay, from

passing through the Poe Lock earlier Wednesday.

Since January 15, the Poe Lock, one of the Soo's two operational locks, had been closed and underwent inspection and maintenance. The second operational lock, the MacArthur Lock, has been closed since December 15. The MacArthur Lock is undergoing maintenance and is expected to reopen later next month.

All of the work on both locks has been done by 60 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers employees.

In 2008, 8,461 vessels passed through the Soo Locks, carrying 80.6 million tons of cargo, mainly iron ore, coal, stone and other bulk products.



The Canadian tanker, the *M.T. Algosar*, was the first ship to pass through the Soo Locks in Sault Ste. Marie Wednesday, March 25. (Photograph by Carmen Paris)

Youth Cash in on Reading Efforts at Carnival



The giant inflatable obstacle course topped Reading Carnival activities at St. Ignace Elementary School Wednesday, March 25. Children lined up to take turns over and over, trying to improve their skills and challenging classmates and teachers to see who could finish the fastest. The activities were offered to students at St. Ignace Elementary and Middle School during the Reading Carnival that followed a month-long campaign by educators to motivate students to read. Students earned tickets for their reading efforts, which they exchanged for activities Wednesday.



Above: Excitedly awaiting the shout of "go," Logan Rickley, a first grade student at St. Ignace Elementary School, is ready to take on the rigors of the inflatable obstacle course, a favorite Reading Carnival activity.



Above, left: Seventh grade student Michaela Miller puts her artistic talents to work painting a mustache and beard on the upper lip and chin of fifth grade student Erin Bunker. Watching is Kaitlin O'Rourke, who volunteered next for the same facial artwork.



At left: Swiftly sailing down the giant inflatable slide set up in the elementary school gymnasium, first grade student Tessa Shepard waves to her friends. Almost touching the ceiling, the slide was an activity offered at the Reading Carnival.