

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Trail Closures Did More Damage Than Good

To the Editor:

My neighbors and I know exactly how letter writer Jon Matteson [Letters, November 19] feels regarding what the Forest Service has done to our land that we have enjoyed for so many years.

I'm writing in regard to road closures around Six Lakes, off M-123, about one mile west of I-75. It has been a popular spot for years, for hiking, mushroom picking, berry picking, fishing, and hunting. Area people enjoyed bringing their little ones out to fish and would bring a picnic for a day of family fun. In these hard times, there isn't much left for some of them to do.

It was brought to my attention by my neighbors, when I recently returned from a hunting trip, that the Forest Service has been busy. They came in from the Castle Rock Road, cut ditches, closing the private property owners' road access. They also pushed trees onto roads and tore up the roads. This made them impassable for anyone to walk or use any kind of ORV access.

What if there is a fire back there? We now have to worry about our homes. Did the Forest Service give that a thought? We live with it. And I have put innocent campfires out through the years.

These roads have been here for at least 50 years. It was where they hauled dirt out for the building of I-75 and M-123. It has been basically limited access for all this time. People have to cross private land from the north end of Six Lakes to get there in the first place. The only time they would use the access from Castle Rock Road was if it was a dry year.

The reason that the Forest Service did this, it reported, was people have been tearing up the area with their ORVs and trucks. These roads and trails were in as good of condition as they have been for over 50 years.

The trees that they chose to push down were live trees. If my neighbors or I would have done that to build a deer blind or shooting lane, how much of a fine or restitution would we be looking at?

There are other places in the area that could have used some work. So please stop tearing up the land we enjoyed so much. Start doing projects that would really make a difference. It would have been nice to get a letter or phone call from the Forest Service before all of the damage was done. Just maybe a better solution could have been worked out.

John Gold  
St. Ignace Township

## Forest Service Trail Closure Discriminates

To the Editor:

The U.S. Forest Service discriminates against the old people and the disabled.

On November 11, I got on my ORV and started out to bait my deer stand a mile back at Schlehbers Marsh, only to find the trail completely destroyed where it enters federal property. I could not believe the damage that was done. Trees were bulldozed across the trail for 600 yards. My neighbors and I have been using this trail for 35 years.

My wife and I have diabetes. I have had two heart attacks and am just now recovering from a major back surgery. I can only walk short distances. I feel this action is discriminating against the older people and the disabled. Over the years, I have seen more and more gates blocking access to federal property, roads with signs saying "foot travel only." I have enjoyed Michigan's outdoors for 70 years and would like to continue - but cannot. Being a taxpayer for 54 years, I helped pay for roads I now cannot use. What happened to the "handicap accessible" law? Is the forest service exempt from this law? I would like the district ranger to explain this to the public in writing.

It is my hope this reaches our Representative Gary McDowell and Congressman Bart Stupak, also the American Civil Liberties Union. We will be asking for their help to stop this blatant discriminatory practice.

According to a Forest Service letter dated January 17, 2008, "The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability..."

Gilbert Todd  
Trout Lake

## Michigan Needs Structural Change To Pay for Education

To the Editor:

Rarely does a week go by without some government official paying lip service to the woeful state of funding for Michigan's education. The governor keeps holding meetings, legislators express concern; the Department of Education says it's a problem . . . yet nothing changes. Our schools' budgets have been slashed, our children's futures are at risk, yet nothing changes.

Why? I suggest that the main reason is that our elected officials, from top to bottom, both parties, are cowards. For years it has been clear and obvious that structural changes in how we fund education in Michigan are needed. Some good ideas on how to accomplish this exist. Unfortunately, these changes require that partisan interests be set aside and that everyone is at the table and everything is on the table.

Democrats refuse to consider changes that might anger the teachers' union. Republicans refuse to consider tax hikes that may, in fact, be required in times of decreased revenues that might anger their voting base. Our elected representatives choose politics over doing the right thing. Being re-elected or staying in power trumps our children's and our state's well being.

Difficult times call for heroes, not cowards. I and others are working on school financing plans that will require courage and integrity from our elected officials and from us, the voters, who elect them. I ask that you join me in calling them out, in demanding that they start doing the work required of them, to put aside partisan interests - or it becomes our responsibility to be the heroes and fire the whole lot of them and elect others that put our children's and state's interests above lobbyists and party interests. Be a hero to our children - call, write, e-mail, demand that the changes happen now, during an election year, or [they] face finding a new job next November.

Rick Shapero  
Cedarville

## Wawatam Poem

To the Editor:

I wrote this poem and dedicated it to my father, Albert LaJoice, who worked for 40 years on the *Chief Wawatam*.

### Chief Wawatam

I have kerfed the clear blue waters  
Of the Straits of Mackinac  
With my hull of solid steel.  
Time has worn my keel raw.

I have cut the calm and crystal surf  
and flexed my decks in blazing sun,  
I rested in my wooden berth,  
While weary from each run.

I was once the mighty champion,  
Carving channels through the ice,  
I've been moored in ice rows  
That near crushed me like a vise.

I have braved the dread nor'westers  
and have grounded on the reef,  
I have loved each one who sailed me,  
I was their mighty Chief.

Robert J. LaJoice  
St. Ignace

## Salvage *Chief Wawatam's* Anchor

To the Editor:

I read with great sadness the article about the *Chief Wawatam* [The St. Ignace News, November 12]. My dad, Levi Furlott, sailed on her many years ago. I was a deckhand on her when I went in the Army in 1944.

I talked to someone in St. Ignace last year about the anchor. I believe it is still in the water in Mackinaw City; they just cut the chain and left it there. That would look nice on the ramp in St. Ignace where the Chief used to land. Maybe Purvis would donate it to St. Ignace. Maybe a fund could be started to salvage it.

I will watch *The St. Ignace News* to keep posted on donations.  
Lawrence "Ashcan" Furlott  
Farwell

## 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. A fee of \$35 will be charged for wedding photographs published 45 days or later, following ceremony. For weddings published 90 days or later following ceremony, the charge will be our open display advertising rate, (minimum \$50).

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# Michigan Politics

By  
George Weeks



## Liberals, Conservatives Agree on Something

Michigan Democrat Debbie Stabenow last year had the 11th most liberal voting record in the Senate - exceeding 80% - and was on the party leadership team that unveiled its health care package last week in the Democratic-ruled Senate.

Representative Dave Camp (R-Midland) has a solid conservative voting record - approaching 80%, according to the National Journal system for Capitol Hill ratings - and was among Republicans leading the futile effort to pass a GOP health care alternative in the Democratic-ruled House.

But, lo and behold, Stabenow and Camp emerged on the same page last week on an issue where Governor Jennifer Granholm and some state Republicans are showing rare bipartisan cooperation: promoting alternative energy projects that will stimulate job creation.

There are far bigger issues in both Lansing and Washington these days, but it is good to note an area that is in sharp contrast to prevailing partisan bicker mania in both capitals.

"Stabenow, Camp Announce Bi-Partisan Solar Manufacturing Jobs Creation Act," headlined a Stabenow press release.

She said: "Michigan companies continue to lead the way in solar manufacturing, creating good-paying jobs and laying the foundation for 21st century manufacturing."

Joining Representative Mike Thompson (D-California) in introducing the bill to offer a tax credit to solar manufacturers, Camp, ranking Republican on the powerful House Ways and Means Committee, said: "Michigan is fast becoming a leader in solar manufacturing, and the bill we have introduced today will further help this industry grow and create much needed jobs.

"With the highest unemployment in the country, this is exactly the jobs-creating program we need to focus on, and this sort of manufacturing is just what Michigan needs. As the author of the tax credit for the purchase of electric plug-in vehicles and other alternative fuel vehicles, I have long championed incentives for the manufacture and use of alternative fuels."

Indeed he has. Years ago, to underscore his initiatives, he presided at a demonstration of alternative fuel vehicles at the Traverse City Civic Center.

Democratic Lieutenant Governor John Cherry, leading contender to get his party's 2010 gubernatorial nomination, also has credentials as an advocate of alternative energy initiatives. He has long touted "Green Jobs for Blue Waters," a theme picked up by the Granholm administration as part of promoting water, wind,

wood and other sources to tap energy.

Last week, from Tel Aviv, Cherry announced that a second Israeli firm he met with on his investment mission there has committed to a pilot project in Oakland County for energy generation directly from wastewater.

Cherry, who met with more than 20 CEOs from leading Israeli water technology companies, said: "This commitment is another important step in establishing Michigan as the gateway to water technology in North America. Green Jobs for Blue Waters has played a pivotal role in Michigan's economic diversification."

Cherry's statement was released by Granholm's office, which, to put it mildly, has helped trumpet Cherry's blitz of activities as he approaches Election 2010.

Republican Bill Schuette, who has served in all three branches of government and as lawmaker in both Lansing and Washington, is one of the most versatile politicians I have known. Like Detroit Tigers who can catch, and also play first or third base.

After being a three-term congressman, unsuccessful 1990 nominee for the U.S. Senate, state senator and state agriculture director (with wife Cynthia, he started the annual Michigan Harvest Gathering food drive for the needy that lives on), and elected judge of the Michigan Court of Appeals covering all northern counties and beyond, he quit the court to run for attorney general.

Schuette, 56, is early leading contender to be next years Republican nominee to replace term-limited AG Mike Cox, a top tier contender for the Republican gubernatorial nomination.

During the recent 20th anniversary of fall of the Berlin Wall, I was reminded of what makes the ebullient Schuette such an interesting seize-the-moment figure. On the day that word came that the wall was beginning to fall, then-Congressman Schuette told his staff to figure a way to get him there immediately. They did, and within 24 hours, he was at the wall as it collapsed.

Other Michigan politicians had been at the wall, including Governor Bill Milliken in 1981 and shortly after it was built about 20 years earlier in August of 1961. But Schuette says he was the only Michigan politician there as the wall hit the dirt.

His staff ever so kindly provided film of that day for media airing.

*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.*

## United States Coast Guard

## Petty Officer Gagnon Is Named October Employee of the Month

Petty Officer Joe Gagnon of St. Ignace has been named the U.S. Coast Guard employee of the month for October. Petty Officer Gagnon has been recognized for his hard work ethic and positive attitude.

He dropped everything he was working on at the station to aid a Habitat for Humanity housing project for a local family, said Executive Petty Officer Jonathan Tracy. He helped with installing drywall and moving heavy siding at the house.

During a duty weekend, he laid the wood floor in the new Search and Rescue gear locker, which improves functionality of the space. In addition, during his free time, he came to the station to help with framing walls for the station's new crew lounge. This gives the



Petty Officer Joe Gagnon

duty crew a comfortable area while standing duty during the long winter months, Officer Tracy said.

In addition, Officer Gagnon made it a priority to look out for a new shipmate and helped prepare him for a successful boat crew qualification.

# The St. Ignace News

and Les Cheneaux Islands Weekly Wave

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