

A plan to control sport permit fees

By LEM MESEE
Outdoors writer

Most outdoorsmen are complaining about the stiff increases in hunting and fishing licenses proposed by the staff of the state Department of Natural Resources, but one suburban man is offering a counter-proposal.

Bob Laich, District 1 chairman of the Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC), reported he got a noncommittal but warmly interested response from other MUCC leaders and a DNR official recently.

The Westland resident proposes a new approach to license revenues, which since the 50-cent deer license of 1895 have come entirely from the pockets of hunters and fishermen.

Under Laich's plan, the state would charge \$5 for a basic state land use permit. Besides hunters and fishermen, it would have to be purchased by snowmobilers, bird watchers, cross country skiers, trail bikers — in short, anyone who uses state lands.

Such an approach would remove one major objection hunters and fishermen have to the license system. Their complaint is that they pay but all sorts of non-hunters and non-fishermen use state woods and waters.

On top of the land use permit,

Laich's plan calls for relatively small hunting and fishing stamps to be purchased and attached to the state land use permit. He's thinking in terms of \$2 for small game, \$3 for big game, \$2 for fishing, and so on.

In contrast, the DNR staff is proposing these hikes: the small game license by 50 percent to \$7.50; the firearm deer license by 67 percent to \$12.50; fishing license by 43 percent to \$7.50; trout-salmon stamp, 67 percent to \$12.50; elimination of free fishing for spouses; and so on.

The issue is immensely complex. Michigan issues no less than 32 different kinds of sportsmen's licenses. Revenues go to the state game and fish protection fund, which purchases most state recreation lands.

The matter is before the Natural Resources Commission and ultimately the Michigan Legislature.

THE DETROIT RIVER may begin producing salmon and trout this spring. The Huron River at Flat Rock has been a little disappointing, but the Clinton River has some promise.

That's the word from DNR's southeast Michigan district office as it reported on 1978 fisheries projects.

Nettings in the Detroit River showed the first return of adult coho salmon at

Belle Isle last fall — 339 of 'em. Shore anglers caught a number, though as usual a small portion of the fishermen got the giant share of the fish.

Several anglers caught 40 or more coho apiece.

The coho fishery on the Huron River was described as "poor to fair" last

fall, and "very few" chinooks showed up. But 20,000 steelhead were planted in the lower Huron last April.

In November, the Clinton River produced a state record kokanee salmon — 18 inches and a half-ounce short of two pounds.



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