

A foot in each outdoors camp

By **Lens Meese**
outdoors writer

In one corner are traditional hunters and fishermen, concerned with enough game and spawning beds for next year.

In another corner is the environmental movement, with its concern for pollution, wetlands and endangered species, and its antipathy toward industry.

In center ring, with a foot in both camps, is Tom Washington, executive director of the Michigan United Conservation Clubs and one of the most potent lobbyists in Lansing.

Washington gave the Western Wayne County Conservation Club doses of both movements this week as he updated this hunting-oriented club on the vast changes occurring in the state capital. The former Belleville resident was paying his first visit to old friends in 10 years.

His double-barreled observations:

GOV. BLANCHARD — The new chief executive "has never hunted or fished, but he had a good environmental record in Congress.

"He has three appointments to make to the Natural Resources Commission and hasn't made 'em. But he was down in Washington to testify for the Great Lakes lab in Grosse Ile.

"It's obvious the governor has some serious interest in separating off segments from the Department of Natural Resources and putting them in other departments," a conclusion supported by statements from Phil Jourdan, the budget director. "Washington opposes breaking up DNR.

THE LEGISLATURE — Gone are one-third of last year's members, including nearly all the pals of both the hunting-fishing and environmental camps: Tom Anderson from the House Conservation Committee, John Hertel from the Senate Conservation Committee, and Kerry Kammer of land trust fame. So is Gov. Milliken, a loyalist to both corners of the ring.

Sen. Joe Mack of Ironwood heads the Senate Conservation Committee — "an ardent hunter and

fisherman. He's in the corner of the sportsman, but he's difficult on wetlands and other lands issues."

Nevertheless, Mack is sponsoring SB 170, which might become the first dioxin felony law in the nation. Other supporters are Basil Brown, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, and Senate Majority Leader William Faust of Westland.

PUBLIC LANDS — Rep. Jack Gingrass of Iron Mountain is backing away from HB 4063 to auction off 1.4 million acres of the state's four million acres of land. Washington considers the bill extremely dangerous.

"The state owns four million acres and the federal government three million. That's seven million acres in public ownership, more than any state east of the Mississippi.

"I maintain it's the real reason we have a \$4.5 billion tourism industry. Hunting and fishing are worth several billions, but they never get the credit from economists in the Commerce Department.

"The outpouring of reponse (from MUCC members) was so great that Gingrass has pulled back. ... But Gingrass meant business. They had the skills all greased. That's what organized sportsmen can do."

STATE FOREST LANDS — There's pulling and hauling over who should govern them — land management personnel or wildlife personnel. Washington holds that a wildlife manager should have co-equal authority with the land manager.

The U.S. Forest Service wants to get rid of less commercially desirable aspen trees and replace

them with red pine, which timbermen like but which are of no use to wildlife. MUCC is resisting, he said.

Project ELF, the Navy's communications grid idea, has been scaled down to the point where it is no longer an environmental threat to the upper peninsula.

SCHOOLS — MUCC's Tracks Magazine is reaching 20,000 youngsters a month. Its wildlife discovery program is being presented by 300 volunteers to schools and will reach 30,000 students this year. "We're making a small dent in education," he said.

INDIANS — On the Indian gill-netting controversy, Washington said U.S. Interior Secretary James Watt is urging Blanchard to "get off his duff and do something" to finish work on an agreement ending the battle.

Washington said Indians claim interest only in whitefish, but he predicted they will "start heavily netting salmon this year."

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Proud Lake gun range doomed, says Washington

Oakland County hunters will have to travel a little farther to sight in their rifles and shotguns because it's unlikely a new gun range will be built at Proud Lake State Recreation Area north of Wixom.

The prediction came from Tom Washington, executive director of the Michigan United Conservation Clubs during a speech to the MUCC affiliate in western Wayne County.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources' plans to build a new \$700,000 range in the Proud Lake State Recreation Area met so much political resistance from Commerce Township that DNR is likely to abandon the idea, even though its latest environmental impact statement could pass a court test, Washington said.

Four alternative sites are available in the Inland Lake State Recreation Area of eastern Livingston County, where officials of Green Oak Township are receptive.

MUCC opposed locating a range in the Pontiac or Bald Mountain recreation areas. "There wouldn't have been a range on the west side of the Detroit metropolitan area," he said. The Natural Resources Commission is buying the Inland Lake area, "though unfortunately it means we go through the whole environmental impact statement process again."

Because of gravel pits in the Inland Lake area, a shooting range is likely to be less onerous there.

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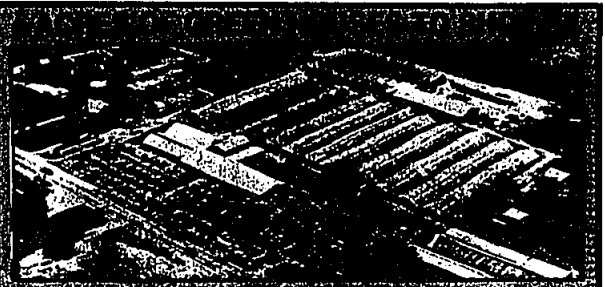
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