

Proposed legislation would affect state's bear hunters



OUTDOOR INSIGHTS

BILL PARKER

Area? — wild game dinners or fur retailers.

Never before have we engaged in a political battle centered around a public vote to preserve our right to pursue a particular game animal in this state. Never, that is, until now.

A wealthy Upper Peninsula property owner has enlisted the help of New York City-based Fund For Animals to bring an anti-hunting ballot proposal to a public vote. The proposal would call for a ban on baiting and the use of hounds while hunting black bear in Michigan.

To uninformed non-hunters this may not sound like such a big deal. "So what, if hunters can't use bait or dogs," they may say. But eliminating baiters and houndsmen would eliminate the majority of bear hunters.

It would immediately remove 95 percent of the people who hunt bears from the woods," said Bloomfield Hills Resident Bill Walker, chairman of the Legislative Committee of the Michigan Bear Hunter's Association.

The ban would also neutralize the only current effective tool in the management of Michigan's largest predator. It would eliminate a revenue source (Last year alone more than \$72,000 was generated through the sales of bear licenses) for the DNR and it would take away a valuable tool for scientific research since a tooth from each bear harvested and the reproductive track from most sows are turned over to DNR biologists.

A tough target.
The black bear is a crafty, reclus-

sive animal. He can not be successfully hunted on a regular basis by simply stalking out a trail like many deer hunters do in their pursuit of the wary whitetail. Without the use of these two time honored techniques the odds of a hunter harvesting a black bear would be reduced to the point of high improbability.

"Within one year, I'd predict the number of bears in the state would be beyond any present method of control and we'd end up hiring people to trap, move and destroy nuisance bears," Walker said.

Rogers, president of Sportman and Property Owners Rights and Trusts, informed Department of Natural Resources director Roland Harmes of his intentions to solicit enough signatures (256,457) to bring such a proposal to a public vote. July 11th is the deadline to submit petitions to get a proposal on the ballot for the November 1994 general election. Since no effort to collect the signatures has yet been launched it is believed Rogers and his supporters will target the 1995 presidential election.

In his letter to Harmes, Rogers claims houndsmen were his original target and that he has no problem with the use of bait. Baiting, he states, was only added to the petition language as a requirement to gain the support of The Fund For Animals, one of the largest anti-hunting organizations in the nation. (The Fund For Animals is the same group that brought about Proposition 11, which put an end to mountain lion hunting in California; Proposition 10, which stopped bear hunting in Colorado; and Proposition 200, which was defeated last year, but was worded as to ban just about everything from trapping to fishing in Arizona. The Fund For Animals is currently focusing on an effort to ban mountain lion and bear hunting in Oregon.)

Rogers claims he and fellow members of SPORT have major problems with trespassing houndsmen in the Upper Peninsula. While it is certainly possible there have been trespassing problems, statistics compiled by the

DNR dispute the claim that trespassing is a major problem. In the last five years, DNR Region 1 must have received just 38 dog related complaints.

Groups like the Michigan Bear Hunters Association, Michigan United Conservation Clubs and Michigan Bow Hunters are keeping a close eye on the situation.

Battle lines are apparently being drawn. Senator Harry Gast (R) is attempting to bring Rogers and the DNR to the bargaining table in an attempt to resolve the dispute, but it may already be too late. "We, as always, welcome discussion on this issue, but would like to point out that the expense of funds is putting us beyond a point of no return," Rogers stated in his letter to Harmes.

If you hunt, even if not with dogs or over bait, I urge you to support bear hunters in their battle to protect this American tradition. This issue isn't just about hunting bear with dogs and bait, or about trespassing, its about hunting big game animals in Michigan. If the anti's get a foothold in the state and believe they can come in here and force their slanted views down the throats of Michigan voters they won't sit idly or go away. We must show them that Michigan's one million-plus hunters are a mighty, unified group that won't back down and won't stand for an attack on our right to hunt.

Anglers and hunters are urged to report their success. Questions and comments are also encouraged. Send information to Outdoors, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009. Fax information to 844-1314 or call Bill Parker Monday evenings at 901-2573.

OUTDOORS CALENDAR

CLASSES

WILDLIFE ART FESTIVAL

More than 50 of the best wildlife artists from the United States and Canada will exhibit their work on Friday, Saturday and Sunday in the 11th annual Michigan Wildlife Art Festival at the Southfield Civic Center. Proceeds from the show will be used for wildlife restoration and habitat protection. The festival also features wildlife seminars, conservation exhibits, winning photos of the Outdoor Writers Association of America photo contest and thousands of affordable wildlife paintings, prints, carvings, clay and bronze sculpture, stained glass, porcelain and jewelry. Show hours are 4-9 p.m. Friday, March 25, 9 a.m.-8 p.m. Saturday, March 26, and 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Sunday, March 27. Admission is \$7 adult for a weekend pass and children under 12 will be admitted free.

HABITAT SEMINAR
Joe Derek, host of the radio program Naturally Michigan Affair, will present "Backyard Habitat Seminar" beginning at 7 p.m. Wednesday, March 30, at the Farmington Community School. Seminar fee is \$7. Call 489-3333 to register.

WILD TURKEY WORKSHOPS
The Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the Wild Turkey Federation are offering wild turkey orientation courses. WTF's Huron Valley Chapter is offering workshops today in Warren and Thursday, March 31, in Taylor, 421-2593. The Blue Water Chapter is offering a workshop Saturday, in Almont, 798-3677.

SAFARI CLUB FUND RAISER
The Southeast Michigan Bowhunters Chapter of the Safari Club International will hold its third annual Fund-Raiser Banquet beginning at 6 p.m. Saturday at the Imperial House in Fraser. Evening activities include dinner, open bar, outfitter and manufacturer booths, auctions, raffles, door prizes, hunting and fishing trips, wildlife art and more. Tickets are \$30 per person, (810) 885-1415.

FISHING CLUB MEETINGS
The Four Seasons Fishing Club meets 7:30 p.m. the first Wednesday of each month at the Maplewood Center in Garden City, 477-3816.

offer a class leading to a Michigan Safe Hunter certificate beginning at 8 a.m. Saturday and Sunday at the Wayne County Sportsman's Club in Romulus, 632-0286. Similar classes will be held April 23-24 and May 21-22.

WALLEYE FISHING SEMINAR
The Metro-West Chapter of the Michigan Steelhead and Salmon Fisherman's Association is offering a free seminar on walleye fishing beginning at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, April 5, at Garden City High School. The seminar features some of the top walleye fishing specialists on western Lake Erie and the Detroit River, 420-2965.

SHOTGUN CLASS
The Wayne County Sportsman's Club will offer a series of classes on shotgun safety and marksmanship beginning April 11, 532-0285.

BANQUETS

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FISHING CLUB MEETINGS

FOUR SEASONS
The Four Seasons Fishing Club meets 7:30 p.m. the first Wednesday of each month at the Maplewood Center in Garden City, 477-3816.

MICHIGAN FLY FISHING
The Michigan Fly Fishing Club meets at 7 p.m. the first and third Wednesdays of each month at Livonia Clarenceville Junior High School, 420-2233.

METRO-WEST STEELHEADERS
Metro-West Steelheaders, a non profit club dedicated to educating the public on improving, preserving and promoting anadromous sport fishing, meets at 7:30 p.m. on the first Tuesday of each month at Garden City High School, 420-2965.

SEASONS

RABBIT
Statewide through March 31.

FISHING
The 1993 fishing licenses expire March 31.

COYOTE
Statewide through April 15.

WILD TURKEY
April 25-May 20, by special license in designated areas throughout the state.

DIP NETS
April 1-May 31 in non-trout waters in the Lower Peninsula.

SMELY
Through May 31 south of M-72.

TROUT
Opens April 30 on trout streams and designated trout lakes.

METROPARKS

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