

Conservation group 'adopts' an area park

BY TIM RICHARD
STAFF WRITER

An Oakland County group, the Multi-Lakes Conservation Club, has become first in the state to "adopt a park" under a new state law.

Multi-Lakes, an affiliate of the Michigan United Conservation Clubs, adopted the Proulx Lake State Recreation Area, which surrounds the headwaters of the Huron River in Commerce and Milford townships.

Gov. John Engler singled out Multi-Lakes and president Marty Johnson during a tree-planting ceremony on the State Capitol lawn. Engler signed a bill freeing the state from liability for volunteers' efforts.

"This will allow volunteer groups to assist state park staff in spring cleanups, accessibility projects, public information and other efforts," Engler said.

The adopt-a-park program is similar to the Michigan Department of Transportation's adopt-a-highway, in which companies,

civic and church groups clean up highway rights of way.

Proulx Lake features camping, swimming, boating, canoeing and fishing. It is one of 98 state parks up for adoption.

The hoopla over tree-planting and park-adopting is part of the bipartisan effort to raise more operating money for Michigan state parks as they observe their 75th anniversary this year.

Voters on Nov. 8 will decide on a constitutional amendment to end so-called "diversions" from the Natural Resources Trust Fund and set up the Genesee-Gillette Endowment Fund. Purpose is to raise and dedicate \$40 million in revenues from oil and gas leases to support the state parks operating budget.

Since 1980 the state parks budget has gone from 62 percent

general fund money to 21 percent. But despite higher user fees, park operations have been scaled back. State park user fees, per vehicle, have been raised from 50 cents a day in 1960 to \$2 in 1986 to \$4 currently. Annual passes cost \$18.

Here is the status of other bills in the "State Parks Initiative" package:

SB 970 — Makes technical amendments to the state park commission act — signed by governor.

SB 951 — Uses state income tax form to promote sale of annual state park stickers — signed by governor.

SB 952 — Creates a state parks foundation — passed Senate.

SB 370 — Honors the 75th anniversary of the state park system — passed Senate.

HB 5245 — Provides volunteer liability protection for adopt-a-park program — passed both chambers and ordered enrolled.

HB 5246 — Amends Natural Resources Trust Fund act — ready for House approval.

HB 5247 — Amends tourism policy to make specific references to state parks and natural resources.

HB 5248 — Provides \$40 million from sale of the Accident

Fund for the endowment fund — passed both chambers.

HB 5249 — Provides \$20 million from the sale of the Accident Fund for Civilian Conservation Corps — passed both chambers, returned to House for concurrence in amendment.

Senate Resolution 218 — Urges car rental companies to place state park stickers in windows of rental cars — passed both chambers.

Volunteers needed for AIDS plan

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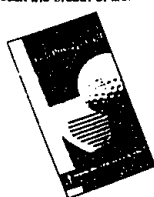
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