

Official leaves conservation legacy

By BILL PARKER
STAFF WRITER

The tragic news swept through the outdoor community like a wildfire out of control. Thomas L. Washington, long-time executive director of the Michigan United Conservation Clubs and president of the National Rifle Association, passed away Tuesday of complications following a heart attack.

"It's a tremendous loss to the entire state because Tom was one of the greatest conservation leaders we've ever had," said MUCC president Art Dittmar, of Farmington Hills. "It's a loss not just to the state, but to the entire nation because of his work with the NRA and the National Wildlife Federation."

"But his legacy will continue," added Dittmar. "This is a very, very strong organization he has built in MUCC, and we will continue to carry the fight for natural resources in the state. And his legacy will live on in the Natural Resource Trust Fund as well, which was his brainchild. He was the chairman of that, and it will continue into the future."

According to Dittmar, Washington, 58, and the father of six, hunted on November 15, opening day of the Michigan firearms deer season, near his cabin in the Upper Peninsula. He wasn't feeling well when he awoke on the 16th and was later flown to the Oakwood Medical Center in Dearborn after suffering a heart attack. He

underwent open heart surgery Monday night and passed away from complications at 12:30 p.m. Tuesday.

Washington's career with MUCC began in 1983 when he was hired by the statewide conservation organization as an independent contractor selling ads for MUCC's magazine, Michigan Out-Of-Doors. He rose through the ranks and became executive director and publisher in 1974. He held those positions until his death. He was honored for his conservation efforts by many groups including Safari Club International and the Michigan Duck Hunters Association. He was instrumental in getting the Bottle Bill passed, which brought forth refunds on beverage bottles. He co-signed the Tribal Fishing Agreement, worked on the multi-million dollar Luddington Pump Storage Settlement, the Firearms Preemption Act, the State Park Endowment Fund and the Shooting Range Protection Act. He was also a strong supporter of MUCC's statewide education programs.

"MUCC's motto is: Conservation through Education. That was Tom's big push," added Dittmar. "He felt if we could educate people about the wise use of our natural resources that they would support conservation."

Rick Jamison was appointed acting executive director of MUCC. He will carry on in that capacity until the executive committee hires a new director.

Washington's funeral will be held Saturday in East Lansing.

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OUTDOORS CALENDAR

ARCHERY

3D LEAGUE

An indoor 3D league begins at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 13, at Detroit Archers in West Bloomfield. Call (810) 661-9610 for more information.

MEETINGS

FRIENDS OF BALD MOUNTAIN

Friends of Bald Mountain will hold a membership meeting beginning at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 7, in the shooting range building at the Bald Mountain Recreation Area, 1330 E. Grenshield Road in Lake Orion. Naturalist Jonathan Schechter will present a slide program on wolves in Michigan and will also discuss coyote sightings in Oakland County. There is no fee, and the meeting is open to the public. (810) 693-6767.

SHOWS

CAMPER SHOW

The Pontiac Silverdome Camper, Travel and RV show will be held Jan. 24-28 at the Pontiac Silverdome.

SEASONS

BASS

Statewide through Dec. 31.

BOSCAT

Through March 1 in Zone I, Jan.

1 to March 15 in special areas of Zone II.

COYOTE

Through April 15 in Zone I. Through April 15 in Zones II and III.

DEER

Archery season runs through Jan. 1. Muzzleloading season is open through Dec. 10 in the Upper Peninsula and runs Dec. 8-17 in the Lower Peninsula.

ELK

Dec. 12-19 by special permit.

FOX

Statewide through March 1.

MUSKIE

The muskie season runs through Dec. 16 on Lake St. Clair and the Detroit and St. Clair Rivers.

RUFFED GROUSE

Through Jan. 1 in Zones II and III.

RABBIT

Statewide through March 31.

RACCOON

Statewide through Jan. 31.

SQUIRREL

Statewide through Jan. 1.

SHOOTING RANGES

BALD MOUNTAIN

The rifle and pistol range at the Bald Mountain Recreation Area is open 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays, noon to sunset on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays and 10 a.m. to sunset on Wednesdays. Call (810) 814-9193 for more information.

PONTIAC LAKE

The range at the Pontiac Lake Recreation Area is open 10 a.m. to sunset Wednesdays through Sundays. Call (810) 666-1020 for more information.

FISHING CLUBS

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. Call (810) 478-1494 for more information.

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. Call (810) 477-3816 for more information.

METRO-WEST STEELHEADERS

Metro-West Steelheaders meets at 7:30 p.m. on the first Tuesday of each month at Garden City High School. Call (313) 420-2965 for more information.

FISHING BUDDYS

Fishing Buddys Fishing Club meets monthly in Rochester Hills. Call (810) 656-0556 for more information.

METROPARKS

METROPARK REQUIREMENTS

Most Metropark programs are free, while some require a nominal fee. Advanced registration and a motor vehicle permit are required for all programs. Call the respective parks, toll free: Stony Creek, 1-800-477-7756; Indian Springs, 1-800-477-3192; Kensington, 1-800-477-3178.

SNACKS WITH SANTA

A program including a hayride, a visit with Santa, a snack and a chance to sing holiday songs will be held throughout the day on Dec. 9 and 10 at the Kensington Farm Center. Admission is by advance ticket purchase only. (810) 685-1616. A similar program will be held Saturday at Indian Springs.

FULL MOON WALK

An evening hike under the light of the "Cold Moon" begins at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 6, at Stony Creek. A similar program begins at 7 p.m. at Kensington.

CHRISTMAS CRAFTS FROM NATURE

A program for ages eight and older in which participants will learn to make holiday crafts from natural objects begins at 2 p.m. Sunday at Stony Creek.

ANNUAL PERMITS

The 1996 Huron-Clinton Metroparks annual vehicle permits and annual boat launching permits are on sale at all Metropark offices. Vehicle permits are \$15, \$8 for senior citizens. Boat launch permits are \$18, \$9 for seniors. Call 1-800-47-PARKS for more information.

TOYS FOR TOTS

The Huron-Clinton Metroparks are serving as collection centers for the Toys for Tots program. The program is conducted annually by the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve to serve needy children in local communities by providing new, unwrapped toys during the holiday season. Anyone wishing to donate new, unwrapped, non-violent toys can drop them off at any of the Metroparks through Dec. 18. Call 1-800-47-PARKS for more information.

OAKLAND COUNTY PARKS

COUNTY PARK REQUIREMENTS

Advanced registration is required for all nature programs at Oakland County Parks. Call (810) 625-6473 to register or for more information.

CHRISTMAS TREE RECYCLING

Addison Oaks, Glen Oaks, Grayland Oaks, Independence Oaks, Lyon Oaks, Orion Oaks, Red Oaks, Springfield Oaks, Waterford Oaks and White Lake Oaks will all be accepting Christmas trees for recycling Dec. 26-Jan. 14.

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(See More for details)

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