

# Ballot proposal would affect bear hunting



BILL PARKER

The anti-hunting campaign is moving forward. The Michigan-based anti-hunting group Citizens United for Bears (CUB), with financial support from the national anti-hunting organizations the Fund For Animals and the Humane Society of the United States, made good with its threat to pay for enough signatures to put an anti-hunting proposal on the November election. CUB collected nearly 350,000 signatures, 100,000 more than required by law, so even if some are ruled invalid there should be plenty of signatures to satisfy the State Board of Canvassers and bring the proposal to a public vote.

Bear hunters have been convinced for a couple of years now that this threat to end bear hunting as we know it is real. CUB states it isn't coming after bear hunting, just a couple "unethical" methods used by hunters to pursue bears. But take away the use of dogs and bait, the way 96-percent of the bears are taken in this state, and you have essentially killed bear hunting in Michigan. Other methods such as glassing or driving simply won't be effective

here with the enormous tracts of swamps and woodlands in the Upper Peninsula where the majority of Michigan's bear population resides.

## Double jeopardy

Bear hunters have said this initiative would eventually affect all hunting but many sportsmen have doubted that claim. Unfortunately, that fact is becoming clearer as election day draws nearer. Archery deer hunters, raccoon hunters and bobcat hunters could well suffer from the trickle-down effects of this so-called "bear hunting" issue.

"If this thing passes the DNR will still have to try to manage the resource," said Ron Lundberg, executive director of Citizens for Professional Wildlife Management, a coalition of sportsmen groups formed by the Michigan United Conservation Clubs to fight the anti-hunting campaign. "The thing is, the language of the proposal says you can't hunt bears when it's legal to hunt deer over bait and you can't hunt bears when it's legal to hunt bobcats and raccoons with dogs. It could have an effect on these other seasons because you'll have to hunt bear sometime."

The ballot proposal calls for no bear hunting from March 1-August 31 and no bear hunting during deer, raccoon or bobcat season if the seasons allow the use of dogs or bait.

Last year's Michigan bear season ran Sept. 10-Oct. 26. With the use of dogs and bait 5,652 licensed Michigan bear hunters harvested 1,458 black bears during that 47-day season. That's a success rate of just 26 percent, despite the use of dogs and bait.

## Reduced seasons?

Michigan's archery deer season, in which baiting is a legal practice, runs Oct. 1-Jan. 1, while our raccoon season, in which the use of dogs is legal, runs Oct. 1-Jan. 31. Since black bears hibernate in Michigan from November through March, with the proposal language submitted, the only possible bear season would be Sept. 1-30.

"That puts the DNR in a situation where they would only have a 30-day bear season in September, or they would have to take something away from the coon or deer hunters," explained Bloomfield Hills resident Bill Walker,

executive director of the Michigan Sportsmen's Defense Alliance and a board member of the Michigan Bear Hunters Association. "In September there is full foliage in the woods and the visibility is very poor. I think the DNR would be faced with a situation where they wouldn't even come close to killing the desired number of bear needed to keep the population under control. They very well could be faced with a situation where they would have to extend the bear season and take something away from another season."

CUB, which was formed by a disgruntled part-time Michigan resident because he had a problem with trespassing, is financially supported with money from out-of-state anti-hunting organizations. CUB claims this attack isn't an attempt to end bear hunting, only the unfair practice of using bait and dogs.

CUB says it wants to protect bears and keep bear cubs from being orphaned.

## Getting to the truth

CUB doesn't explain that despite these "unfair" practices more than 74-percent of Michigan's bear hunters return home empty handed each year. CUB doesn't explain that the bear population is healthy and thriving with upwards of 10,000 animals, or that bear cubs and sows with cubs are protected by law in Michigan. CUB also doesn't explain that with the use of dogs and bait, hunters can get a good look at their quarry before deciding if they want to harvest that particular animal or not. When using bait and dogs, the hunter knows the size of the bear, if it's alone or raising cubs.

Take away these techniques and because of the exclusive nature of bears those hunters who are fortunate enough to

catch a glimpse of a bear will only have a split second to decide if they are going to shoot or not. There will be no opportunity to make a wise decision, just a quick snap judgment.

## Support the sport

I urge all hunters to become pro-active. The days of sitting back quietly and waiting for opening day to arrive are gone. The days of spending all our extra money on hunting trips and new equipment are gone. We must take an active role in spreading the truth about hunting and professional game management to our non-hunting friends and relatives. We must make allowances to financially support the pro-hunting campaign and the effort to derail this misguided ballot initiative. We must make a stand against the anti-hunting forces that want nothing more than to force their views on all Americans.

## Hunters need money to help get word out from their side

BY BILL PARKER

Sportsmen's dollars are rolling in, but the goal is still not within reach.

Citizens for Professional Wildlife Management, a coalition of sportsmen groups formed by the Michigan United Conservation Clubs to oppose the initiative, is moving closer to meeting its financial goal of \$1.7 million. That's the amount needed if hunters are to have any chance of convincing the non-hunting public — the 85-percent of the population which will undoubtedly decide the ballot initiative to outlaw the use of bait and hounds to hunt bear — that professional wild game management is far better for the good of the entire resource than emotional, individual agendas perpetrated by the anti-hunting forces.

"I'm starting to believe we're going to meet our goal," said Ron Lundberg, executive director of CPWM. "We just got our first \$100,000 check from the cabin raffle. AMO (Archery Manufacturers Organization) committed \$100,000, the Michigan Sportsmen's Defense Alliance has pledged \$200,000 and the Southeast Michigan Bow Hunters Chapter of Safari Club International has given \$40,000. We've got commitments of close to \$1 million right now."

To reach the goal of \$1.7 million, however, more in-state fund-raising is needed and several fund-raising events are scheduled in the near future:

■ Southeastern Michigan Bowhunter Chapter of Safari Club International and MUCC are holding a Sportsmen's Fund-Raiser Banquet beginning at 5 p.m. Tuesday, August 27, at Laurel Manor in Livonia. Tickets are \$20 each and include an open bar, dinner and a specialty auction of bows, guns, hunting equipment, wildlife art, fishing and hunting trips, TVs, VCRs and more. There will also be a silent auction, raffles and numerous sports, TV and press celebrities will be in attendance. For tickets and more information call Neal Easterbrook of Safari Club International at (810) 585-7029 or MUCC at (617) 371-1041. Donations are still being accepted for additional raffle and auction items.

■ Tickets are still available for the Upper Peninsula Sportsmen's Alliance's Protect Your Heritage Raffle featuring a grand prize of a log cabin on 40 acres of land on the UP. Tickets are \$5 each and available at sporting goods stores, bait shops and from sportsmen and hunting groups throughout the state. Call Jim Dobb at (906) 542-3473 for tickets and more information. The drawing will take place on Sept. 27.

■ The Michigan Bear Hunters Association is holding a Millionaires Drawing. Tickets are \$100 each and only 400 will be sold. The drawing will be held Sept. 7. Call Don Baughman at (517) 792-9140 for tickets and more information.

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