

Retirees, 'locals' at odds in north woods

Retirees who move to the woods of northern Lower Michigan often find themselves at odds with long-time local residents over the use of natural resources.

"Naturally, few of these 'migrant' support movements to exploit the resources that attract them to the area," says Patrick West, professor of natural resources at the University of Michigan.

In a new study, West said the debate centers on ways to solve a "blow-off" unemployment problem in northern Lower Michigan.

Since blue-collar unemployment is significantly higher than white-collar, regional economic development bodies favor processing of natural resources — such as wood and oil — to provide more blue-collar jobs.

Complicating the debate is that the "reverse migration" generates service needs that increase white-collar employment, according to West.

Carefully managing economic development and retraining programs could create new jobs for both long-term and newer residents," he said.

But he warns that attempts to industrialize the area will be successful only if they preserve the environmental quality that drew city folk there in the first place.

"RURAL ECONOMIC Development Commission of the Population Turnaround in Northern Lower Michigan" is the title of the study by West and LM research scientist Dale Blank and Mark Poy.

In the last decade, there has been a "reverse migration" of retired persons that attracted every theory demographers normally offer about migration," he said.

In terms of unemployment, northern Michigan is a victim of its own success, he said. Over the years, skilled workers from southern Michigan have frequently vacated their jobs, attracted by the well-prospered natural beauty and lack of industry.

But when some of those workers and retirees decided to move to the area, they created more competition for already scarce blue-collar jobs.

West defines blue-collar workers as farmers, machine operators, craftsmen, foremen, farmers and others.

The study covered Crawford, Gladwin, Kalamazoo, Montcalm, Ogemaw, Oshtemo, Otsego and Roscommon counties.

It was funded by a grant from the Maritime-Sunrise forestry research program.

WEST STRESSING aspect of Michigan's reverse migration — and of

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I-96, area roads to be improved

The Michigan Department of Transportation will take bids this week for rehabilitation of the aging I-96 freeway in western Oakland County.

It's among 62 projects that will be winning bidders.

The bid will cost about \$12 million from the state's Road Fund and \$1 million from the state's General Fund.

The bid will be completed by September 1987. It calls for asphalt resurfacing, drainage, grading, and sign upgrading. Estimated cost is nearly \$12 million.

OTHER AREA projects to which bids will be taken are:

- I-75 (Huron Road), one mile in the vicinity of I-96 — concrete pavement widening, curb and gutter, drainage and signing on 0.3 mile and 0.7 mile "C" and "D" at the 850 interchange by October.
- Lodge Freeway southbound exit ramp to Howard Street and west service drive from Howard to Howard in Detroit — construction of grading and drainage structure, sidewalks, concrete pavement, shoulders, barrier wall, street lighting and traffic signals by November.
- Lodge Freeway — replacing piers and electrical facilities for 21 piers from East Eight Mile to Michigan Avenue in Detroit by next March.

POPULATION GROWTH in the area counties averaged about 2 percent from 1970 to 1980. The state's growth was only 4 percent, according to the U.S. Census bureau.

The area's unemployment rate increased from 9.7 percent in 1976 to 23 percent in 1987 — more than three times the Michigan rate of 10 percent in unemployment, West said.

Economic development solutions to the unemployment problem are feasible for these rural areas only if environmentally sound, he emphasized.

Regional planners should note that the index of retirees — about 41 percent of the white migrants — can "utilize" employment opportunities in the white-collar service sector," West said. While not adding to the labor force, they use a wide variety of services, including food and medical, educational, financial and maintenance services.

In addition, the region's resources appear a steady stream of business for at least part of each year. Tourists, that retirees require services.

Moreover, service jobs will help only if white-collar workers are willing and able to move into the white-collar sector, West said.

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OCC joins pact to seek state building aid

Oakland Community College will join a group of five "value" schools in an effort to get building money from the state.

"We're not asking the state to appropriate for anyone else," Nicholson went on, noting that in the state \$170 million community college budget the schools with 25 percent of the students get only 20 percent of the funding.

The group OCC will join in a coalition of five schools: Oakland Community College, Eastern Michigan University, Western Michigan University, Eastern Michigan University, and Western Michigan University.

Other trustees agreed with Nicholson.

"We have special needs for a particular project," said trustee David Pappas. "We have an obligation to compete for funds."

"Over the years," added trustee David Hackett, "other colleges have had special needs for special funds. After 20 years, for us to have special needs is not selfish or opportunistic. Now it's our turn."

He said OCC should exhaust every other source of funding before seeking capital money from the Legislature.

Replied Nicholson: "Funding sources are like glass keys. You can't have two of the same key."

The chancellor said the group of five will include Wayne and Macomb in the University area, plus Michigan State and Lansing community colleges. Eastern Michigan University will include Wayne and Macomb in the University area, plus Michigan State and Lansing community colleges. Eastern Michigan University will include Wayne and Macomb in the University area, plus Michigan State and Lansing community colleges.

With half the cost covered by federal vocational funds.

Approved the low bid of \$110,000 for a new computer integrated manufacturing (CIM) program. Half the cost will be covered by federal vocational funds.

Approved to purchase \$250,000 worth of CIM work and testing from Cross & Trecker Corp., again with half the cost covered by federal vocational funds.

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Wiser's \$5,600 tops OCC race

Oakland Community College trustee David Hackett said that the bid of \$5,600 by Wiser for OCC's new computer integrated manufacturing (CIM) program was the highest bid received.

Hackett, who was also trustee of the Detroit Zoo, said the bid was the highest bid received.

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Clarification

A story in last week's edition incorrectly reported OCC chair David Hackett's resignation. Hackett is not resigning. He is stepping down as chair but will remain on the board.

Clarification

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