

## Tug of war

### Interest groups battle for trust fund

By Tim Richard  
staff writer

A three-way tug of war is developing in Lansing over \$20 million that has been going into the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund.

"We're flushing out the issues," said the referee — state Rep. James Kosteva, D-Canton, who chairs a House conservation subcommittee.

The question is whether the money goes to preserve natural land, rebuild combined sewers or battle pollution on a broader basis.

The pullers and their interests:

- Environmentalists — buy "sensitive land" for water recharging. Anything else violates "the integrity of the fund," said David Stead of the Michigan Environmental Action Council.
- Michigan United Conservation Clubs — use it to attack the problem of combined sewer overflows. CSOs are the discharge of combined sanitary and storm waters in heavy rains, the retention basins overflow into rivers like the Rouge. "Communities are under the (federal) gun to deal with CSOs," said Richard Moore, MUCC's water resource specialist.
- Cities and villages — "The

Municipal League says \$20 million is a drop in the bucket," said Don Stypula, MML's environmental specialist. MML wants pollution projects rated by their severity, with no special priority to CSOs.

Kosteva's panel heard testimony Tuesday morning in Lansing.

STATE VOTERS in 1984 gave constitutional status to the land trust, dedicating oil and gas revenues from state-owned lands.

"Before that, the Legislature constantly raided the land trust fund," said MML's Stypula.

(Gov. James) Blanchard wanted \$20 million a year diverted to his Michigan Strategic Fund, for economic development stimulus," he said. "There is a sunset on the strategic fund — Sept. 30, 1993. It ceases to draw from the trust fund."

(Tom) Washington (executive director of MUCC, a sportsmen's and environmental association) came up with the idea of continuing the diversion but using it for CSOs," said Stypula, a former MUCC employee. "MUCC is selling it as a combined sewer elimination plan."

For the Rouge River, which turns into an open sewer during heavy spring rains, eliminating

CSOs would cost \$1 billion over 20 or 25 years.

That estimate came from Tom Kemppanen, the state Department of Natural Resources' head of surface water quality.

"That's the cost of 20 Silverdomes," an Oakland County official once said.

What's bringing the issue to a head is a new federal Water Quality Act. No longer does it provide direct construction grants to communities. Instead it sends money to the states, which must set up revolving funds to make loans to communities.

THE STICKING point is that the state must put up 20 percent matching funds.

"We won't have a state match unless we have the \$20 million from the (land trust) revolving fund," said DNR's Kemppanen. That's the money that will cease going to the Michigan Strategic Fund in fiscal 1994.

"The (Engler) administration wants to hang onto it (\$20 million) for economic development," said Rep. Tom Mathieu, D-Grand Rapids. Mathieu is sponsor of MUCC's proposed constitutional amendment to use the money on CSOs.

## County traffic deaths down

The number of people killed in traffic accidents in Oakland County in 1991 is the lowest reported in 34 years according to the Traffic Improvement Association of Oakland County.

There were 107 traffic fatalities reported in the county last year, the lowest since 1957 when 105 people were killed in traffic.

Last year's fatalities were down from the 110 deaths reported in 1990, a 2.7 percent decrease.

Bruce Madsen, TIA executive director, reported that decreases in the numbers of people killed in the county have occurred despite substantial increases in the total vehicle miles traveled.

"Last year's reduction is all the more remarkable when we consider that traffic volumes, the most accurate barometer of exposure, have increased well over 100 percent since 1957," Madsen said.

TIA cites a number of reasons for declining traffic deaths.

"In recent years we have seen significant, measurable improvements in drunk driving countermeasures, in safer engineering of our roadways and in emergency medical services," Madsen said.

Increased safety belt use and improvements in vehicle safety engineering have also had a significant impact, according to TIA.

Economic conditions are also considered a factor in recent decreases in traffic fatalities.

"Although the trend-line continues

downward, we have observed a definite correlation between economic conditions and fluctuations in traffic deaths. In good years they increase and in bad years they drop," Madsen said.

During the late '60s traffic fatalities averaged about 180 per year. In the '70s they numbered between 160 and 170. During the last five years

there has been an annual average of 126 traffic fatalities.

In the State of Michigan, 1,370 lives were lost in 1991, compared to 1,563 the previous year.

The fatal traffic accident figures for last year are provisional, with a slight increase expected due to a delay in deaths resulting from accidents which occurred in 1991.

### Historical society plans event

The Oakland County Historical Society will host its 118th annual dinner at 6 p.m. Wednesday at Santia's Banquet Center, 1985 Cass Lake Road in Keego Harbor.

The dinner program's theme is "Books and Bricks." In keeping with the society's feasibility study for the creation of a new research library.

The dinner is open to the public. Tickets are \$20 and are available at the society's headquarters, 405 Oakland Avenue in Pontiac. For more information, call the society at 338-6732.

FRANCIS X. BLOUIN JR., director of the Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan, will speak on "The Role of the Historical Library in Oakland County."

A recognized authority on archives and archival research, he won international acclaim in 1989 for launching a project to establish a research data base for the holdings of the Valuable Archives in Rome.

Musical entertainment for the evening will be provided by the Rich Harvey Trio.

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