

Friday, June 20, 2008, 11 a.m.

34 DNR employees have been working since Monday in the city of Saginaw, yes, CITY, to assist with storm damage tree removal and brush cleanup. Staff from the Forest, Mineral and Fire Management Division; Wildlife Division; Parks and Recreation Division; and OLAF have been traveling every street removing downed trees and brush piles. The storm brought down more than 700 trees throughout all parts of the city.

Saginaw Department of Streets crews moved the debris off the roadways but the task remained to remove the piles of brush piled along every street. Without such assistance, it would be months before the city could get all the material cleaned up and things back to normal; their best estimate being late August.

So the DNR, upon receiving direction from the Governor's office, was assigned to provide on-the-ground assistance. DNR personnel were notified last Monday, and by Tuesday morning, three crews were hard at work beginning in the southwest corner of the city working northward. Each crew has a brush chipper, dump trucks and loaders, and, of course, willing DNR staff.

The overhead team also is from all the represented Divisions. Paul Simmer, FMFM, is the Incident Commander. Carl Lindell, Parks, is Operations Chief. Rex Ainslie, Wildlife, is Logistics Chief. Lee Osterland, FMFM, is the Safety Officer. Connie Haven, OLAF, was added as Finance Chief, and Ada Takacs and Courtney Borgondy, FMFM, are Information Officers. The team works closely with the city streets department even to the point of using some of their equipment to haul wood chips and direct street traffic away from some of the busier streets. It's truly a cooperative venture.

Crews work 12-hour shifts, beginning the day at 7 a.m. and working until 7 p.m. Equipment is staged in local parks or school parking lots and lunch is eaten in the field ... only this time the field is city street. Thus far, we have cleaned brush from the sides of 100 miles of city streets over a four-square-mile area.

Along the way, we've met many pleased neighbors, had our share of warm days, equipment breakdowns, and been filmed by local TV stations channel 25 and 16. Working in the city is indeed a new experience for all of us, but we definitely are glad we've been able to help.

