



Western Upper Peninsula Citizen Advisory Council DNR Division Reports

Date of Production: January 2025 (Information current as of 1/8/2025)

This document is provided by Michigan DNR staff as a supplement for Western UPCAC Council members. Please email or call with any questions.

Meetings/Events/Press Releases

Upcoming DNR Public Meetings

For virtual or conference call meeting information, please go to the DNR website at: [DNR Meetings](#) and click on the appropriate meeting and/or agenda for instructions.

January 9	Michigan Natural Resources Commission, 8:30am (NRC@Michigan.gov)
January 11	Citizens Waterfowl Advisory Committee, 10am-4pm (517-927-8059)
January 15	Forest Management Advisory Committee, 1pm (517-582-3204)
January 15	Western Upper Peninsula Citizens Advisory Council, Virtual, 6 pm ET (906-226-1331)
January 23	Nonmotorized Advisory Workgroup, 10 am (517-331-6219)
January 27	Board of Foresters, 3pm (989-370-9557)
February 13	Natural Resources Commission, Lansing, 9am (nrc@michigan.gov)
February 19	Eastern Upper Peninsula Citizens Advisory Council, Virtual, 6pm (906-226-1331)

UP State Park & State Sponsored Activities

Please check with the state park before attending activity for any scheduling changes. For all activities: [DNR Things to Do Calendar](#)

January 10	Van Riper State Park – Lantern-lit Snowshoe
January 24	Van Riper State Park – Lantern-lit Snowshoe
January 25	Fayette Historic State Park – Lantern-lit Trail
January 25	Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park- Lantern-lit Guided Snowshoe Hike
February 1	Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park- Lantern-lit Guided Snowshoe Hike
February 7-9	Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park- Midwest Telefest 2025
February 8	Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park- Lantern-lit Guided Snowshoe Hike
February 15	Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park- Lantern-lit Guided Snowshoe Hike
February 22	Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park- Winter Snowburst Carnival
October 3-4	Fayette Historic State Park-Fayette Fall Fest

Recent DNR Press Releases

For full details, go to: [DNR Press Room](#)

- January 'Wildtalk' podcast episode now available and listener survey (1/4/25)
- 28 Michigan communities share \$106,000 for tree-planting projects (1/2/25)
- Christmas trees for fish and wildlife habitat? There are better options (12/23/24)
- DNR offers cold-weather safety tips for outdoor adventurers (12/20/24)
- Future salmon and trout incoming! (12/19/24)
- History, trails, forestry and more at DNR's January meetings (12/17/24)
- DNR News: Christmas Bird Count, e-bike survey, small-biz opportunities (12/16/24)
- Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund board recommends projects totaling \$41.7 million to boost outdoor recreation (12/13/24)

- Showcasing the DNR: Help keep eagles flying along Michigan highways (12/13/24)
- Winter is the best time to check trees for hemlock woolly adelgid (12/12/24)
- DNR, MSU collaborate to help community trail-building (12/12/24)
- 150 celebrate at Michigan Mass Timber Update: Opening Doors event (12/11/24)
- DNR approves nearly \$1.9 million in recreation grants for local park and trail improvement, development (12/10/24)
- DNR announces support for park upgrades in 12 counties in Michigan (12/10/24)

Grant Contacts

For grant information, to go: [DNR Grants](#)

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|---|---|
| ▪ Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Grant | Merrie Carlock, 517-284-5931, carlockm@michigan.gov |
| ▪ Recreation Passport Grant | Merrie Carlock, 517-284-5931, carlockm@michigan.gov |
| ▪ Michigan Spark Grants (Public Recreation) | Merrie Carlock, 517-284-5931, carlockm@michigan.gov |
| ▪ Aquatic Habitat Grant | Chip Kosloski, 517-284-5965, kosloskic3@michigan.gov |
| ▪ Fisheries Habitat Grant Program | Chip Kosloski, 517-284-5965, kosloskic3@michigan.gov |
| ▪ Michigan Invasive Species Grant | Erin Campbell, 269-300-9698, campbelle6@michigan.gov |
| ▪ Wildlife Habitat Grant | Clay Buchanan, 517-614-0918, buchanenc1@michigan.gov |
| ▪ U.P. Deer Habitat Improvement Partnership Grant | Bill Scullon, 906-563-9247, scullonh@michigan.gov |
| ▪ Forestry Grants | https://www.michigan.gov/dnr/buy-and-apply/grants/forestry |
| ▪ Land & Water Conservation Fund | Christie Bayus, 517-242-8737, bayusc@michigan.gov |
| ▪ Waterways Program Grants | Linnea Dawson, 517-290-2200, dawsonl@michigan.gov |

Eastern UPCAC Update

The **Eastern UP Citizens' Advisory Council** met virtually on December 2. Agenda topics included a preliminary overview of the 2024 deer season, an update of this year's fire season and a snowmobile season preview. Additional business included reports from various division staff, old business items, subcommittee reports and approval of 2025 meeting dates and locations. **The next meeting of the group will be on February 19 in a virtual format.**

More information on both the Western and Eastern CACs can be found at www.michigan.gov/upcac.

December NRC Meeting Recap – Ed Golder, Public Information Officer

The Natural Resources Commission met on the West Campus of Lansing Community College in Lansing on December 12.

Scott Whitcomb, director of the Office of Public Lands, substituted at the meeting for Director Scott Bowen, who was engaged with the Legislature on priority matters affecting the department.

Scott Whitcomb approved:

- The [results of the Oct. 22 oil and gas lease auction](#).
- Three land transactions. Details of those transactions can be found in the [agenda online](#).

Chair Tom Baird announced the appointment to the Commission of James LaPorte, who attended his first meeting today. Commissioner LaPorte's appointment was announced this week by the governor's office. Commissioner LaPorte is president of Luna Entertainment. He holds a Bachelor of Arts with a concentration in business administration and economics from Augsburg College and a Master of Business Administration from the University of St. Thomas. LaPorte is appointed to represent Independents for a term commencing Dec. 10, 2024, and expiring Dec. 31, 2027. He succeeds Robin Michigizhigookwe Clark, who resigned from the commission earlier this year.

Commission Chair Tom Baird was recognized and thanked for his service as a commissioner, the last three as chair. Chair Baird is leaving the commission at the end of the year.

Committee of the Whole

Jon Gray, president of the Michigan chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation, together with Law Enforcement Division Capt. David Malloch, presented the 2024 Michigan National Wild Turkey Federation Conservation Officer of the Year Award. The award went to Conservation Officer James Garrett, who has been a CO for seven years, currently serving in Roscommon County. CO Garrett was recognized for building an excellent working relationship with law enforcement agencies in the area, for his can-do attitude, and for being “confident, professional, and very effective when it comes to enforcing the law.”

Jon Gray then presented an award to the designer in this year’s Wild Turkey Management Cooperator Patch Contest.

Capt. Malloch presented a Life Saving Award to Conservation Office Zachary Smith and Corunna Police Officer Stacey Wilburn. On March 11 of this year, the two were on patrol when they received a call that an individual was experiencing a mental health crisis. They tried to contact the individual by phone and through the door of their apartment. They were finally able to access the apartment with the help of the manager. They found the individual with a bag over their head and a knife nearby. They removed the bag and secured the area. EMS arrived to provide medical care. Their decisive and quick actions saved the person’s life.

Chad Fedewa and Samantha Courtney from the Wildlife Division gave a preliminary report on the results of the 2024 deer seasons. The results are based on mandatory harvest reports submitted by deer hunters during the season, and may not align perfectly with actual harvest, depending on hunter compliance. The data will be supplemented by our mail-in survey of deer hunters.

A total of 597,715 people purchased a deer kill tag this year, a 1.4% increase in license sales this year over last. Compared to 2023, reported harvest (through Dec. 3) was up 16.3 percent in the Upper Peninsula and increased nearly 1% in the Northern Lower Peninsula. Harvest was down 6.58% in the Southern Lower Peninsula. Across the state, reported harvest was down 2.65%. Of the deer harvested, 145,015 were antlered and 76,123 were antlerless.

The decline in Southern Lower Peninsula deer harvest could be attributed to a number of factors, including an outbreak of Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD) that was most severe in southwest Michigan. As of Dec. 4, deer in 15 counties have tested positive for EHD, all in the Southern Lower Peninsula. A total of 4,456 EHD deer were reported to the department through Eyes in the Field. This should be considered a minimum number. This is our largest outbreak of EHD since 2012, when there were some 15,000 EHD deer reported. This year’s testing for chronic wasting disease found no detections in new locations in the state.

Chad and Samantha also updated the Commission on our ongoing involvement with hunters following the Deer Management Initiative that was undertaken this year. The DMI was formed to address distinct challenges with deer management in the Upper Peninsula and Lower Peninsula respectively. Those groups will continue to advise and interact with the department as UP and LP deer advisory teams.

The department also proposed an accelerated schedule for approving and finalizing deer regulations for the coming year. Part of that schedule will be making sure that regulations and summaries are in stores and available on time, which was a problem this year.

A report on legislation affecting the department was provided to commissioners and is listed below.

How to Participate in the NRC Meetings

- If you're unable to attend the meeting but wish to submit written comments on agenda items, please write to: Natural Resources Commission, P.O. Box 30028, Lansing, MI 48909 or email: nrc@michigan.gov.
- If you would like further information or would like to address the Commission, please email: nrc@michigan.gov. Persons registering on or before the Friday preceding the meeting will be allowed up to five (5) minutes for their presentation. Persons registering after the Friday preceding the meeting or at the meeting will be allowed up to three (3) minutes. Persons with disabilities needing accommodations should contact the NRC Assistant.
- Look for the agendas and other Natural Resources Commission items at the Natural Resources Commission webpage (www.michigan.gov/NRC).

December Legislative Update – Chris Semrinec, Legislative Liaison

HB 5428 – Creates Opt-Out Option for Recreation Passport Fee – Rep. Brixie: This bill amends the Michigan Vehicle Code to include the fee for the Recreation Passport in the vehicle registration renewal fee, with the option to opt out.

- This bill was reported with recommendation with substitute (H-1) by the House Natural Resources, Environment, Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Committee and is awaiting a vote on the House Floor.
- The Administration is in support of this legislation.

HB 5873 – Adjusts Recreation Passport Revenue Distribution Formula – Rep. Mentzer: This bill would amend the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act to modify the formula for distribution of funds received from the Recreation Passport.

- This bill was reported with recommendation by the House Natural Resources, Environment, Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Committee and is awaiting a vote on the House Floor.
- The Administration is in support of this legislation.

HB 6219 – Provides Free Recreation Passport to Veterans and Active Duty Military – Rep. Mentzer: This bill would amend the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act to provide free access to all state parks and DNR managed boating access sites to all veterans and active-duty military.

- This bill was reported with recommendation by the House Natural Resources, Environment, Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Committee and is awaiting a vote on the House Floor.
- The Administration in support of this legislation.

SB 1124 – Creates Michigan the Beautiful Plan – Sen. Shink: This bill would amend the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act to create a land and water preservation plan.

- This bill has been referred to the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Agriculture.
- The Administration has not yet taken a position on this bill.

SB 1140 – Include Crocodylians as Prohibited Species – Sen. Polehanki: This bill would amend the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act to include crocodylians as a prohibited species.

- This bill has been referred to the Senate Committee on Regulatory Affairs.
- The Administration has not yet taken a position on this bill.

Division Updates

NOTE: This month's Division Reports will be condensed as the last reports were provided less than one month ago on December 12, 2024 and the activity period was shortened due to the holidays.

Fisheries Division: Darren Kramer, Northern Lake Michigan Management Unit

- Brad Sucha is the new Technician Supervisor in the Northern Lake Management Unit (Mark Mylchreest retired early October). Brad earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Fisheries and Water Resources from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point in 2010. Prior to coming to Michigan, Brad gained a lot of diverse field- and hatchery-based experience working for the Wisconsin DNR conducting lake and stream surveys, stream habitat projects, and completing spawning and rearing operations for walleye, white suckers, and muskellunge at Art Oehmcke Hatchery. For the last 8 years, he has worked as a fisheries technician in the NLMMU covering the waters of the central and western Upper Peninsula in the Lake Michigan and Lake Superior watersheds. Brad started his new duties on December 23.

Forest Resources Division: Tom Seablom, Western UP District Supervisor

- Field work for the 2027 YOE Inventory season has Started. Staff has been trained in an upgraded Inventory system. The Baraga Open House is scheduled for May 20th at the Baraga Customer Service Center. Open

House and Compartment Review schedules for the 2027 YOE are posted online under the Public Input section along with other state forest inventory information at: Michigan.Gov/Forestinput.

- As of January 6th, 316 timber sale contracts are open WUP Wide. This represents 1,050,178 cords of timber on 57,822 acres, valued at approximately \$37.3 million. Included in this are 29 GNA sales representing 141,584 cords of timber on 7,691 acres, valued at approximately \$1.3 million. As of January 6th, 14 sales are available WUP Wide for the minimum advertised price. This represents 30,801 cords of timber. Find more information on State Forest timber sales at: Michigan.Gov/Timber
- WUP Units are reporting 30 Active Timber Sales in the WUP totaling about 6,065 acres. Units are seeing increased quotas from some of our papermills. Some units are seeing rising interest in Hardwood Sawtimber sales and sales in the aspen pulp.
- Commercial Forest staff are working on inspections of already enrolled parcels for compliance. With the Retirement of Gary Willis, Jason Caron will be filling in for that position until that vacancy is filled. Starting January 1st open enrollment for the Commercial Forest Program continues until April 1st. For more information on the Commercial Forest Program go to Michigan.Gov/Commercialforest
- Fire Protection staff responded to 31 wildfires for a total of 125 Acres. The month of October normally produces very few fires. Normally we are at the end of the fire season and fire resources are transitioning into a much-deserved break from fire activity. That did not occur this year, This year, we entered the fall season with drought conditions prevailing. Dry fuel conditions combined with active winds and warmer than normal temperatures, produced an abnormally active fall fire season. Firefighting resources from across the state were engaged in fire suppression activities late into the season. Rain finally moved in to end the fire season for the year in early November. In the coming months fire fighters will be refurbishing equipment and supplies readying themselves for the spring of 2025.
- The forest health program reports Oak wilt was detected in southwest Marquette County for the first time last summer, about 25 miles from known infections in Iron County. Follow-up surveys resulted in confirmation of oak wilt on state managed land few miles away in northern Dickinson County. Treatment of some oak wilt infection pockets has already occurred. Additional treatment is planned to eliminate known oak wilt infections. Additional survey, treatment and outreach activities will occur next year. Locations where oak wilt has been confirmed can be viewed at [Look for Oak Wilt \(arcgis.com\)](https://arcgis.com).

Wildlife Division: Dave Lemmien, UP Wildlife Supervisor

- *Personnel:* Interviews for the Baraga Wildlife Biologist position job are being held the second and third week of January.
- *Winter Conditions*
 - As of December 16th, the average snow depth for the UP was 12 inches, and there had been 10 days of “deep” snow (deep = average snow depth for UP is >12 inches). Our next winter condition update will come out the week of January 6.
 - The following bullets provide some comparison with past winters where somewhat similar conditions existed for those wondering, although please note that no true comparison can be made because each winter is different – we can’t predict how this winter will go even with some similarities.
 - Similar winters to what we are experiencing:
 - 2021-22 - the last winter where deep snow days were being counted in mid-December like this. On 12/13, the average snow depth was 14 inches and there were 2 days of deep snow. By the following week (12/20), the snow depth was down to 4 inches and there had been 3 days of deep snow. That

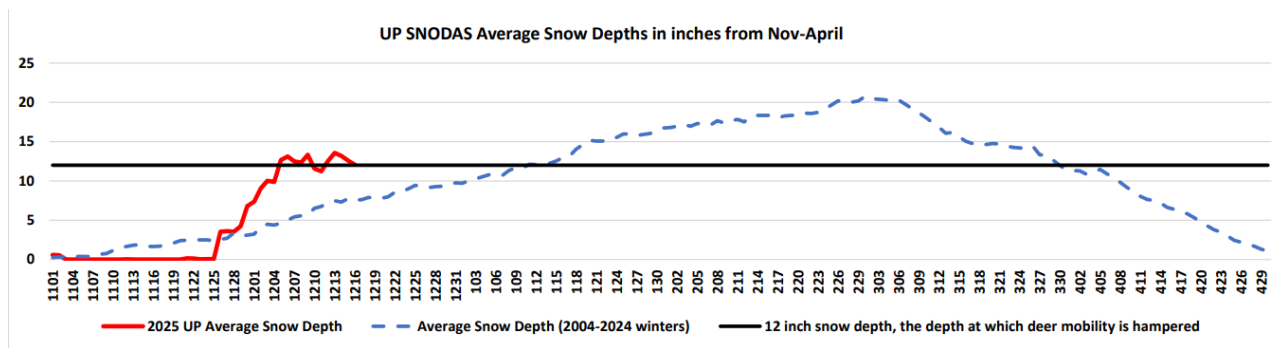
year, we started counting deep snow days again around 1/10, and the winter ended up with 96 days of deep snow compared to the average at the time of 80 days.

- 2019-20 - there were 18 inches of snow on 12/16 and 15 days of deep snow already. The winter ended with 122 days of deep snow, far above the 80-day average.

– A more comprehensive view:

- Since 2004, 12 winters had at least 1 day of deep snow before Jan. 1. Of those 12 winters, 7 were in the severe classification (i.e. 90 or more days of region-wide average snow depths of >12 inches).
- Since 2004, 9 winters had deep snow after the New Year only. Of those 9, 2 winters persisted at least 90 days, classifying them as severe.

– While the current winter has some similarities to past severe winters, it is unclear what will happen this winter. We may not know much about this winter until sometime in January or later.



Parks & Recreation Division: Doug Rich, WUP District Supervisor

Camping

Bewabic State Park	At Bewabic SP we are preparing for construction of a new t/s building and new asphalt in spring 2025 which will cause major closures in the campground.	● Up	0	
District-Wide	All modern camping in state parks is closed for the season.	● Down	0	
		● Similar to the same period last year	1	
		● Closed / N/A	14	

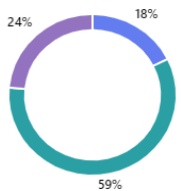
Overnight Lodging

Fort Wilkins Historic State Park	One of two cabins is closed due to construction.	● Up	0	
Craig Lake State Park	Yurt nights are down at Craig Lake State Park this year, potentially due to the weather and lack of snow.	● Down	3	
Van Riper State Park	Overnight lodging is down at Little Presque Isle within the Van Riper unit. The weather plays a large role in cabin reservations at this location.	● Similar to last year	4	
Lake Gogebic Field Construction Crew	The Lake Gogebic Field Construction Crew repaired and replaced sections of the floor joists and framing of the small cabin at Craig Lake State Park in December. This was pre-construction work for the upcoming Army National Guard IRT partnership to begin in May of 2025.	● Closed / N/A	8	

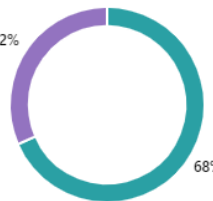
Boating Access Sites and Harbors

Escanaba Field Office	Staff removed all unit skid piers and have taken skid piers from Kipling access site to Baraga for refurbishing.	● Up	0	
		● Down	0	
		● Similar to last year	6	
		● Closed / N/A	11	

Trails

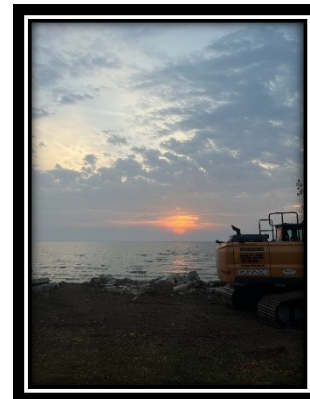
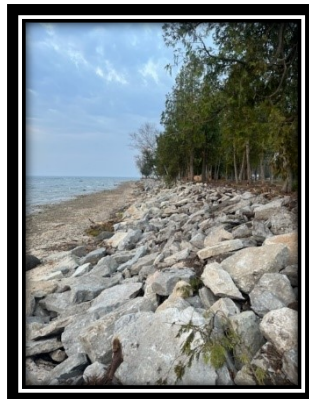
Escanaba Field Office	Early season snow has allowed staff to begin packing a base, and grooming Anderson Lake pathway for ski season. Conditions are less than optimal, but skiable. Days River Pathway has yet to see groomable amounts of snowfall.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Up 3 ● Down 0 ● Similar to last year 10 ● Closed / N/A 4 
Little Presque Isle State Forest RA	Blueberry Ridge Pathway - staff has rolled the ski trails as conditions have allowed and will be out over the holidays if the weather cooperates.	
Van Riper State Park	Trail use has remained roughly the same this year at Van Riper State Park despite the weather.	
Baraga State Park	Heavy snow after Thanksgiving brought high use on the snowmobile trails. The movement of the snowmobile trail behind the campground has been positive, but it is taking a bit of getting used to for some riders and some additional signage was needed.	

Day Use

Baraga Field Office	Worked on the Houghton Douglas Falls parking lot project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Up 0 ● Down 0 ● Similar to last year 13 ● Closed / N/A 6 
Bond Falls Scenic Site	The site is currently closed for the season. Inquires for 2025 use permit weddings are coming in and being processed.	

Design, Construction, Capital Outlay and ARPA Projects

Lake Gogebic SP	Work at Lake Gogebic State Park headquarters area was completed in November. This was the construction of a sewage mound septic system for the headquarters area building and part of the ongoing ARPA project at the park.
McLain State Park	McLain's Lagoon replacement project is nearing the end, and the park will be open as usual on in the spring.
Little Presque Isle State Forest RA	Little Presque Isle Trail Improvements on current trails, within the Van Riper unit, are continuing to be worked on. Most work that was able to be completed has been and other portions of the projects will need to wait until spring. Work has been completed well and should be a huge benefit to the visiting public.
Fort Wilkins Historic State Park	West Toilet shower building construction on schedule, estimated completion June 2025.
Bewabic State Park	We are on track to begin construction of the ARPA funded toilet shower building. Land clearing should commence by March 2025.
Van Riper State Park	Construction regarding roof replacement and installation of new furnaces at the Michigan Iron Industry Museum within the Van Riper State Park unit are in the final stages. The collections team was at the museum in early December to reinstall exhibits to reopen to museum to visitors.
Twin Lakes State Park	Twin Lakes Bathroom Building is still on track to get replaced in the 2025 use season therefore the park is slated to be closed to camping for 2025.
Escanaba Field Office	Staff have demobilized from multiple projects at JW Wells state park- with shoreline armoring being nearly complete, with topsoil to be completed in spring. The Ranger Dorm/Icehouse building has been demolished and will also require topsoil in the spring.
Wells State Park	Construction of the shoreline erosion project is still taking place in the campground. <i>(Below: Photos of the shoreline armoring project at J.W. Wells State Park)</i>



Baraga State Park	Staff have been working on project requests and preparation for the upcoming MIARNG partnership for 2025.
Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park	Kick off and construction for the Visitors Center renovations/ modernization has begun.

Special Events, Volunteer Projects, Accomplishments, Challenges or Personnel News

Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park	The Grand Opening of the Porcupine Mountains Shooting Complex - home of the Lake Superior Sportsman's Club had 60-70 people in attendance and was covered by several media outlets. The Porkies Ski hill opened on 12/27 but closed a few days later due to warm and rainy weather. Hopefully colder and snowier weather returns.
Bewabic State Park	Bewabic's lead ranger has been vacant for just under a year now. The seasonal ranger position is also vacant.
McLain State Park	Due to a recent departure, McLain/Twin Lakes administrative support position has been reposted on NEOGOV.
District-Wide	Relatively quiet time of year for PRD with the changing seasons and holidays.

Public Information Office – John Pepin, Deputy Public Information Officer

- With the start of the new year, we continue to look for ideas and contributors to our weekly Showcasing the DNR feature story series. These stories are issued via email on Thursdays. Media across the state often republish these stories and their associated photographs in a wide range of publications and online postings. The series is increasingly popular, with our subscriber list now including almost 38,000 readers, more than doubling the readership in just a few short years. To see previous stories, visit: Michigan.gov/DNRStories.
- Over the next few weeks, I will be looking for opportunities to photograph outdoor winter activities. If you know of any great places to find a lot of photogenic snowmobilers, skiers, ice anglers or snowshoers, please send me an email to let me know: pepinj@michigan.gov.