



# The Bear Facts

December 2023

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## MBHA joins coalition in lawsuit against U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to force decision on petitions to remove federal protections for wolves

By Victor Skinner

The Michigan Bear Hunters Association, Upper Peninsula Bear Houndmen, Wisconsin Bear Hunters Association and the Sportsmen's Alliance are suing the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service over wolves.

The coming litigation centers on the wildlife service's failure to respond to two gray wolf petitions filed on June 29, 2023 asking the service to consider changes to how it manages the species under the Endangered Species Act.

The Endangered Species Act requires the agency to respond to the petitions within 90 days, which would have been Sept. 27. The coalition of conservation groups filed a notice of intent to sue the service on Nov. 10.

"Hunters, trappers and anglers play a



Eight wolves visit a bait site in the Newberry BMU during the 2023 bear hunting season. Hunters across the Upper Peninsula reported conflicts with wolves this year, including some who lost hounds in attacks.

...continued on page 6

## Bear registration numbers point to big UP overharvests, underharvests in Lower

By Victor Skinner

Preliminary bear harvest numbers for 2023 are showing significant overharvests in two of seven Upper Peninsula units, and underharvests in two of three units below the bridge.

Michigan Department of Natural Resources bear specialist

Cody Norton told The Bear Facts that while officials continued to collect paper registrations and clarify others through mid-December, the trends were clear.

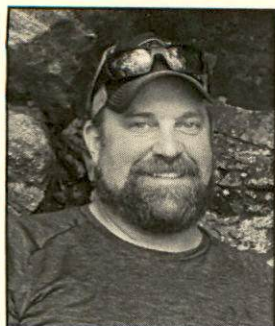
"In the UP, especially the western UP, most of our harvest was right on to where we want to be," Norton said, pointing to Baraga, Bergland, and Amasa bear management units.

Hunters in Amasa killed about 170 bears, compared to a desired harvest of 165, while in Baraga there were 282 registrations for a desired harvest of 300. In Bergland, where the target was 200, hunters took 213.

BMU	2023 Preliminary Harvest	2023 Desired Harvest	Difference	% Difference
Amasa	170	165	5	3%
Baraga	282	300	-18	-6%
Bergland	213	200	13	7%
Carney	133	116	17	15%
Drummond Island	5	5	0	0%
Gwinn	210	150	60	40%
Newberry	391	260	131	50%
Baldwin	129	185	-56	-30%
Gladwin	28	26	2	8%
Red Oak	283	317	-34	-11%

...continued on page 8





MBHA President  
Keith Shafer

## President's Message

Hello bear hunters,


As I am writing this, 2024 is just around the corner. It's 49 degrees outside and not a patch of snow in sight. It's been quite a few years since we've had a green Christmas and I remember that I disliked it then as much as I do now. Not having snow to run cats or coyotes isn't going to make the first couple

months of 2024 very fun so pray for snow.

Unfortunately, in late 2023 the Guide bill passed and becomes effective February 20, 2024. This law will create some hoops for guides to jump through for the 2024 season and beyond. The biggest change is the requirement for all guides to be certified in First aid and CPR. Guides will also be required to carry a First aid kit that contains a minimum of, but not limited to, tourniquet, chest seals, compression gauze, CPR mask, trauma shears, sterile eyewash, Mylar emergency blanket, bandages, Moleskin, and tweezers. The complete Guide Bill (Senate Bill 104) can be found at <https://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/2023-2024/publicact/pdf/2023-PA-0221.pdf>.

On November 9 the Sportsmen's Alliance, MBHA, WBHA and UP Houndsmen filed a notice of intent to sue the USFWS. The USFWS has failed to respond to the petitions to delist and down list the lower 48 Grey Wolves, which were filed on June 29, 2023. By law, once the petitions were filed, a 90-day response period was triggered in which the USFW service is required to respond. At the time of filing the intent to sue, the USFWS had surpassed the 90-day deadline by roughly 40 days. We hope filing the intent to sue will elicit a response from the USFWS and avoid having to go to litigation.

The 2024 MBHA annual convention is scheduled for March 1 and 2 in Bellaire, MI. at Shanty Creek Resorts. If anyone is interested in supporting MBHA through donations, please contact Laura Patton at [lpatton@mibearhunters.org](mailto:lpatton@mibearhunters.org). Dinner tickets and room reservations will be available soon. The 2024 MBHA Warchest raffle tickets are available. Please visit our website to order.

Good luck this winter and stay safe.! 

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RIP Sherry Huff,  
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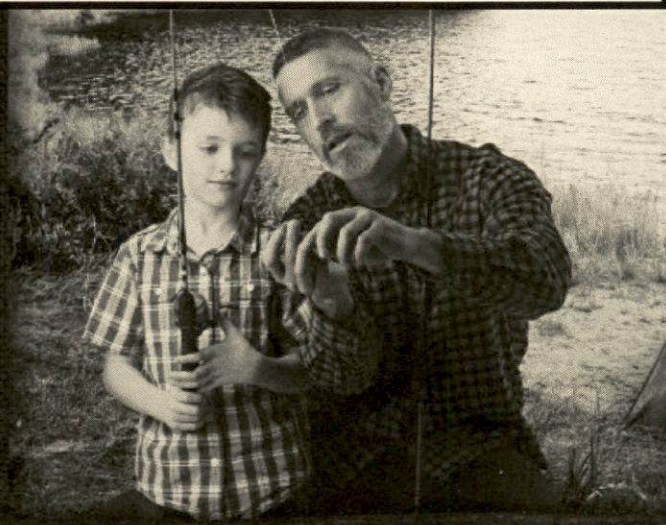
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## 'Queen of the MBHA' leaves behind strong legacy of service to others

By Victor Skinner

"Queen of the MBHA," "wonderful woman," "joyous," "the glue to all of it."

Those are some of the many ways folks who knew Sherry Huff described the matriarch of the Michigan Bear Hunters Association who passed away unexpectedly on Aug. 18 at Munson Healthcare OMH hospital in Gaylord.

"This leaves a hole in your being and you question everything," Sherry's husband, MBHA Director Keith Huff, told The Bear Facts. "We were so much of each other – a wonderful match made in heaven."

Sherry and Keith both played integral roles in the early formation of the MBHA, with Sherry catering meetings for members at a banquet hall in Gaylord that eventually evolved into the organization's annual conventions that draw hundreds from across the state and beyond.

"The prep for that was two to three days. She was a sweetheart," Huff said. "That's when we didn't have any catering whatsoever. We did it all ourselves."

"As far as the MBHA goes, Sherry and Keith are probably the reason the MBHA is where it is today," MBHA President Keith Shafer said. "Years ago they funded all the stuff, the dinners, before the MBHA got big. She did so much for the organization, always."

Sherry was born in Alma, Michigan on Sept. 17, 1946, the daughter of Gordon and Dorothy (Gibson) Clark, and grew up in Breckinridge. She attended Michigan State University to pursue her love of sewing and design, and married Keith Huff on April 29, 1967. Sherry and Keith recently celebrated their 56<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.

While raising two sons, Sherry worked as a pre-school teacher with NEMCSA for three decades, retiring in 2009. She lived a life of service to others, serving years on many boards including the Johannesburg-Lewiston School, Otsego County DHS/DHHS, 4-H, and the COP-ESD.

"She was a real active person in education and understanding how important education was to everyone," Huff said. "Everybody loved her because she had so much insight."

Sherry "absolutely loved northern Michigan" and the simple life it afforded, Huff said. Entertainment consisted of fishing, running back roads, chasing bears, and Sherry's favorite pastimes of reading, sewing, cooking, baking, and hunting.

"She made all my clothes the first eight years we were married," Huff said. "She loved bear hunting. She loved the challenge of it. She loved to ride along and go out to the restaurants."

"I didn't realize how wonderful our life was together," he said. "We never really analyzed our life, it was always good."

"The simple things are what made life so wonderful," Huff said.

Sherry, recipient of the Sparky Hale Award – the MBHA's highest honor, was perhaps best known for the personal connections she forged, from one-on-one work with preschoolers, to helping her grandchildren through life's challenges, to mediating disputes, to welcoming complete strangers with an open heart.

"The words I'd say to describe my grandma would be joyous, laughing, warm, welcoming," said Hannah Leech, Sherry's only granddaughter. "It's hard to put her into single words. She was just always so happy and full of laughter and joy."

For many, Sherry was the go-to person for putting the world into perspective, a reliable source of uplifting inspiration.

"When it came to getting your spirits up ... if you talked to grandma for a minute you'd leave so much happier," Leech said. "She was just so welcoming and she'd talk your ear off."

"The enjoyment she had for life, not everyone has," she said. "She was the glue to all of it."

Longtime friend Mike Thorman offered a similar sentiment.


"What a wonderful woman," Thorman said. "She's like the Queen of the MBHA."

"Aside from her tremendous contributions to the MBHA, she was like a rock, a steady positive influence," Thorman said. "She had wonderful insight into problems and solutions."

"Even if people were on different sides of an issue, she was there, still positive," he said, adding that his calls for Keith often resulted in long talks with Sherry.

"In the dog world, Sherry Huff was universally respected," Thorman said.

Sherry's infectious laugh will be missed by many. She's survived by Keith; sons Rusty (Cindy) Huff and Troy (Heather) Huff; grandchildren, Blake (Leah) Huff, Hannah (Nick) Leech, Coalton (Kara) Huff, Brandon (Madison) Huff, Logan Huff and Sheldon Huff; great-grandchildren, Harper, Kaden, Barrett, Posie, Miles Thomas, and another on the way; brother, Bill (Barb) Clark; sister in-laws, Elaine (Larry) Thompson, Fern (Stan) Kwapis, Theresa Huff, Hazel DuPont; brother in law, Kenneth Sewell; and many nieces and nephews.

Sherry was preceded in death by her parents, Dorothy and Gordon Clark; in-laws, Russel Huff, Rodger and Cora Redick; sister in-laws, Karen Sewell, Carol Kocur, Bonnie Huff, Jean Buc; and brother in-laws, Don Huff, Richard Huff, James Huff and Richard Kocur and Chuck DuPont. 



*Sherry Huff, 76, 'Queen of the MBHA' passed away on Aug. 18, 2023 at Munson Healthcare OMH hospital in Gaylord.*





## Gov. Whitmer signs new regulations on hunting and fishing guides into law

By Victor Skinner

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer signed into law three bills in November that set new regulations for hunting and fishing guides in Michigan.

Whitmer's signature on Senate Bills 103, 104, and 105 on Nov. 22 capped a decade-long effort by most Michigan conservation groups to install guardrails on guiding that the Michigan Bear Hunters Association and others believe are unnecessary.

"While the MBHA agrees that protecting the integrity of hunting is important, we just don't think this bill package will do much to achieve that," MBHA President Keith Shafer said. "The biggest changes include fees for a license, CPR and first aid. The DNR already has the authority to implement the rest, if they want."

Opponents of the legislation, which included 61 lawmakers in both chambers, have pointed to Michigan laws against poaching and the civil courts as existing systems to address bad actors.

"What's most concerning is it opens the door to future restrictions on hunting and fishing in Michigan at a time when the outdoor community is already struggling to bring in new hunters and anglers," Shafer said. "The last thing we need is more hoops to jump through, especially since Michigan has relatively few instances of poaching or wayward guides. We've successfully self-regulated the guiding industry for over a 100 years without the government's help."

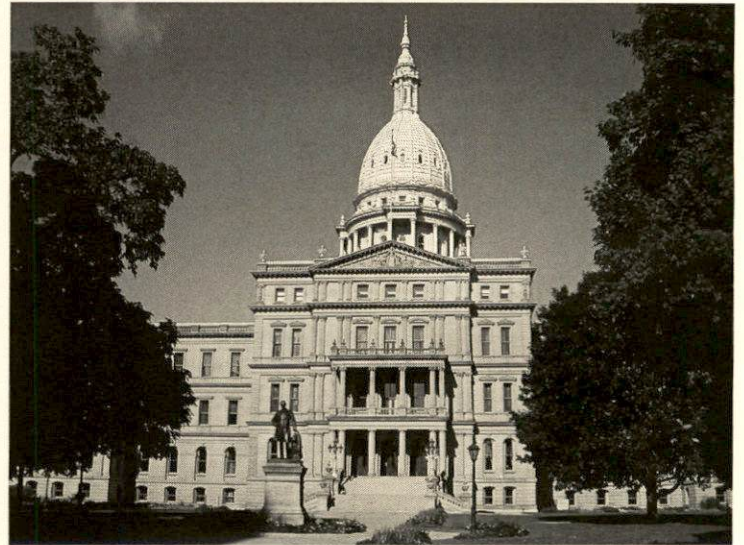
The new law will require guides to secure a \$150 state license that will cover three years. To qualify, applicants will need CPR and first aid certifications, a valid Michigan driver's license and base hunting or fishing license, and no felony convictions or serious game violations in the preceding three years.

In addition, guides will be required to report information to the DNR about clients, harvest, excursions and other data, annually for hunting guides and monthly for fishing guides. SB 105 gives the Michigan Natural Resources Commission the authority to create additional regulations on hunting and fishing guides, such as geographic restrictions or assigned areas.

The new changes come with civil fines of \$500 for a first offense of guiding without a license or guiding on commercial forest land, and a \$1,000 fine for subsequent offenses.

Proponents of the legislation contend it provides a baseline of assurance that commercial hunting and fishing guides are prepared and qualified to represent the hunting and fishing community, while giving the DNR important information on the impact guides have on the resources.

"The need for this legislation has been on MUCC's radar since the late 1990s," Michigan United Conservation Clubs CEO Amy Trotter said. "We must weed out serial poachers



posing as legitimate guides. The legislation checks all the boxes, ensures the integrity of Michigan's commercial guiding industry, and collects important information to manage our natural resources scientifically."

Mike Thorman, legislative liaison for hound hunters, said "there's a lot of changes in it from where it started," noting the bill package started with \$1,000 licenses, \$500,000 bond, and \$1 million in liability insurance when it was initially crafted more than a decade ago.


"It got down to the end and all you have to do is not be a felon, and have a driver's license," Thorman said. "You have to have basic first aid and CPR, and it's a \$150 for a three year license."

"You get this license and you can guide anything," he said.

Thorman said a big motivation for the legislation was to collect data, particularly on inland waterways where the DNR has very little information.

"They don't have the money or the manpower and they have zero idea who's guiding and the effect they're having on the resource," he said. The DNR needs "some idea on how to manage those fish."

The effort to regulate guides has gone through several lawmakers over the last decade, and some of the more conservative in the legislature had thwarted passage for more than a decade. Ultimately it was Sens. Kevin Daley, R-Lum, John Cherry, D-Flint, and Sean McCann, D-Kalamazoo, who sponsored the successful legislation.

"This legislation is a major win, establishing vital regulations for hunting and fishing guides in Michigan, ensuring ethical practices and boosting professionalism in the industry," Cherry said. "I'm thrilled to see the Governor sign this bill. It will enhance data collection on the state's fish and game populations and ensure people engaged in this business are not poaching or engaging in bad behavior — a crucial victory for Michigan's conservation efforts and protecting its natural resources." 





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### **MBHA-Bill Walker Scholarship donors are the best**

The Michigan Bear Hunters Association offers a special thanks to members who donated to help fund MBHA-Bill Walker Scholarships in recent years, including a \$100 donation from Glen Schlukewir in 2021, and a \$300 donation from Ron Pokley in 2020, and another \$500 from Pokley this year.

Those donations are combined with MBHA funds to provide thousands of dollars in scholarships each year to several deserving students pursuing a passion for the outdoors and higher education. Students apply for the scholarships with transcripts and a personal essay, and the winners are awarded each year at the MBHA's spring convention.

Anyone who would like to make a donation can mail a check to MBHA Treasurer Charles Butcher at 716 Maple Ridge Lane, Gaylord, MI, 49735.



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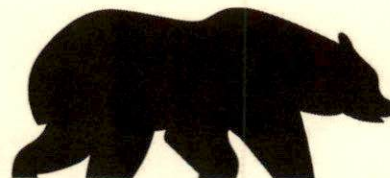
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## MBHA joins coalition in suit against U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to force decision on wolves .. continued from cover

critical role in managing wildlife populations across the country, and we're not going to be ignored when we speak up for what's right," MBHA President Keith Shafer said. "Anyone who has ventured into the woods in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, or northern Wisconsin or Minnesota knows wolves have fully recovered and are thriving. The solutions are simple, if the government takes the time to consider the obvious."

The first petition asks the fish and wildlife service to delist gray wolves in Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin, known as the Western Great Lakes population. The service has repeatedly delisted the Great Lakes population, only to have the decisions reversed through litigation brought by animal rights activist organizations. There's no disputing wolf numbers exceed recovery goals in all three states.

The second petition provides a blueprint for making the change while complying with previous court rulings.

"FWS has had more than enough time to consider our petitions and issue a finding, as required by the ESA, so we are ready to sue to force a decision," said Todd Adkins, the Sportsmen's Alliance's vice president of government affairs. "Our petitions will get wolf management back on track with sound science driving decisions instead of irresponsible and unsustainable anti-science of the extremists, so we will fight to get this done."

Hunters reported at least seven wolf attacks involving six bear hunting hounds during the 2023 season, significantly above the 10-year average of 4.3 events per year. The attacks resulted in the death of a 7-year-old treeing walker in the Gwinn BMU's Rock River Canyon on Oct. 1, just days after wolves killed two hounds less than 20 miles away on Sept. 26 north of Arnold.


DNR data shows a total of 80 dogs killed and 39 injured by wolves in the Upper Peninsula since 2009, with 33 of

the dogs killed in two counties: Chippewa and Mackinac.

With wolves under federal protections, hunters and farmers face criminal penalties for killing wolves, even in the act of an attack on hounds or livestock. In Wisconsin, hunters are compensated for dogs killed by wolves, while Michigan only provides indemnification payments for livestock.

Michigan law allows the public to defend their animals with lethal force, but is currently superseded by the federal Endangered Species Act protections. The uptick in deadly wolf attacks on hunting hounds in 2023 has revived calls from some for Michigan to compensate hunters for hounds killed by wolves they cannot legally protect.

"The state of Michigan should be paying for all the damages these wolves are doing," MBHA Director Keith Huff said. Huff and many others highlighted the heavy wolf presence this year, with some reporting more wolves on their baits than bears.

"This year, we stayed as far away from the wolves as we could," Huff said. 



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## Michigan DNR considers opening second bobcat tag to public or private land

By Victor Skinner

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources is considering new furbearer regulations, including changes for bobcats in the Upper Peninsula.

Current regulations allow for harvest of two bobcats in the Upper Peninsula, with the second tag restricted to private land only. Department of Natural Resources biologist Cody Norton told *The Bear Facts* he is considering recommending that the Natural Resources Commission allow both licenses for public or private land.

"What we've seen is it hasn't really reduced the harvest," Norton said. "What we've heard is it's tough for houndsmen, with cats going on to public land."

The Michigan Bear Hunters Association, Michigan Hunting Dog Federation, UP Bear Houndsmen and others have for years raised concerns about the bobcat population in the Upper Peninsula, where the harvest has declined in the long term.

"Harvest just absolutely drops" over the last two decades, MBHA President Keith Shafer said. "You can see it's an obvious drop in the take and the DNR doesn't really say much about it."

Shafer expects the MBHA to oppose the change, along with other hound groups. He believes the DNR could use a better population estimate going forward.

"I think it needs to stay the way it is, or get rid of the private land tag altogether," he said. "At least until the DNR does a study on cats."

Another possible change would shift the UP bobcat trapping season back by one week, from Oct. 25 to early November, Norton said.

"That should give more time for people to get their free kill tags," Norton said, adding they must be collected before the season starts.

Mike Thorman, who represents hound hunters in Lansing, echoed Shafer's perspective on the changes.

"I don't think the groups I will be open to that," he said. "We're all in favor of one cat" in the UP.

The DNR is reviewing the potential bobcat changes alongside other furbearer regulations the department expects to present to the Natural Resources Commission in February for action in March, Norton said.

The Michigan DNR's 2020 bobcat hunter and trapper harvest report, the most recently published, shows 13,472 people obtained a bobcat tag for the hunting and trapping seasons, a 23% jump from 2019 and 34% above 2018. The 2020 season, amid the pandemic, showed abnormally high license sales for many species and buyer demographics.

About 32% or 4,252 actually attempted to hunt or trap bobcats, and about 20% of them successfully harvested at least one bobcat. The DNR estimates 2,810 people hunted bobcats, with 365 registered. Another 1,887 trapped bobcats and registered 621.

There were about 2,810 who hunted cats, with about 525 in the UP and 2,236 in the Lower Peninsula. More than half of hunters were on their own land or family land, about 34% hunted non-family private land, and about half hunted public land. Nearly 22% hunted public only, about half hunted private only, and 27% hunted both.

While the number of actual hunters, number of times hunters passed on a cat, the number of cats registered and hunter success did not change much between 2018 and 2020, hunter effort increased significantly by 42%.

Hound hunters participated in around 3,329 chases statewide in 2020, an increase of 71%, though the DNR data gives a plus or minus of 838. In about 23% of the chases, hunters opted not to harvest a bobcat. An estimated 658 hunters chose not to harvest bobcats on 1,952 occasions, again with wide variances of plus or minus 112 hunters and 492 occasions.

The DNR estimates about 1,887 trappers targeted bobcats in 2020, with about 63% on private land owned by them or their family. About 44% trapped on non-family private land, about 31% trapped public land. Sixty-eight percent trapped private land only, 11% trapped public land only, and 20% trapped both.

Trappers caught 999 bobcats, registered 621 and released 378 in 2020. The number of trappers statewide jumped by 27% between 2018 and 2020. Trapping effort also increased by 32%. The number of trappers increased in the UP by 45% but remained flat in the Lower.


In 2020, trappers took 64% of bobcats registered. About 20% of trappers registered one bobcat, and 6% registered two. Top counties targeted by trappers included Mecosta, Delta, Chippewa, Menominee, and Newaygo. Counties with more than 30 bobcats registered included Iron, Chippewa, Ontonagon, Marquette, and Delta. 



Photo by Gary Kramer, USFWS





## Early bear registration numbers point to big UP overharvests, underharvests in Lower .. continued from cover

Hunters harvested 133 bears in the Carney BMU, 17 over the target of 116. On Drummond Island, hunters hit the target of 5.

"The east UP is where we saw some exception success rates, more bears than what we were planning on," Norton said.

In the Gwinn BMU, hunters took 210 bears, or 60 more than the desired harvest of 150. That's 40% more than the DNR anticipated. In the Newberry BMU, it was 50% over, with 391 registrations – 131 over the desired harvest of 260.

"We've been seeing the success rate climbing the last five years," Norton said of the Gwinn BMU, noting last year's roughly 35% success rate. "When we look at trend indicators in that unit ... that population seems to have been growing."

"We haven't been increasing harvest because it's been a unit that required the most effort to harvest a bear in the past," he said. "I think this is a good thing, seeing that success rate being more responsive and on par" with other UP units.

In the Newberry BMU, Norton noted the DNR has "been quite a bit above our desired harvest the last couple of years.

"The last couple it seems like there's been more bears and larger bears on the landscape," he said.

A bountiful acorn crop may have factored into fewer bears visiting baits in some units, while others like the Newberry BMU with fewer oaks may have had bears "hitting baits more consistently," Norton said.

"I'm kind of interested to see how that lines up," he said. "We know ... soft mast was pretty phenomenal and oak was pretty phenomenal."

"We've been trying to grow this population and I think we have," Norton said of the Newberry BMU. "We'll be able to adjust and make sure we're hitting where we want to hit."

In the northern Lower, registrations in the Red Oak BMU were down 11%, while they were down 30% in the Baldwin BMU.

Preliminary numbers were 129 bears harvested in the Baldwin BMU, where the desired harvest is 185. Hunters took 283 in the Red Oak unit, 34 shy of the target. In the Gladwin BMU, hunters took two more than the target of 26.

"Seeing Red Oak slightly below, that was a really nice thing to see and lends more support to this population stabilizing," Norton said.

"We're starting to stabilization with our trend indicators, which was the goal," he said.

After several years of increasing licenses in the Baldwin BMU, the population there is reacting, Norton said.

"In the Baldwin unit not too many years ago we had like an

80% success rate there," he said. "Now, we're pretty much spot on with what our success rate is in Red Oak – right around 50%."

"That allows us to put out more tags so people don't have to wait so long" to draw one in the state's most popular BMU, Norton said.

"The northern Lower, I think we're starting to see that population stabilize instead of continuing to increase," he said. "I'd say that's a success in our book, that we're meeting those management objectives."

In the west UP, "we're hitting right on where we want to be with the harvest," Norton said. "In the east UP, I think our population estimate, trend indicators, and harvest this year shows we're getting there" on the DNR's objective to grow the population.

"It's a positive thing what we're seeing across the state with harvest this year," he said.

MBHA President Keith Shafer said natural food seemed to be a big factor in 2023.

"There was so much mast and so much food available, a lot of people were complaining about not seeing bears," he said, noting many complaints came from the west side of the Lower, from Traverse City south.

"Our experience in the Upper wasn't the best and that was absolutely tied to weather," Shafer said. "When we were in Baraga it was warm. I know that seemed to effect bear movement."

Shafer believes guides are likely playing a role in the high harvest in the east UP, which provides the easiest access north of the bridge for many downstate hunters.

"There's a lot of guiding going on in those areas. There's a lot more accessibility in the east UP," Shafer said. Crossbows and new technology are other factors that are undoubtedly contributing to higher success rates, he said.

"The DNR has always said if you're killing more bears, there's more bears there, but I think there's other factors," Shafer said. "They've been overharvesting in Newberry for quite a few years."

Mike Thorman, legislative liaison for hound hunters, agreed with Shafer on hunting pressure factoring into the dynamic in the Newberry BMU.

"I think Newberry is starting to come back, but I don't think the harvest numbers are indicative of how many bears are on the landscape," he said. "I think it gets a lot heavier pressure" than other UP BMUs.

"The population is coming back and as it is coming back you're starting to get bigger bears, but that doesn't mean we should shoot more," Thorman said. "It's not at the point





## Early bear registration numbers point to big UP overharvests, underharvests in Lower .. continued from pg 8


we should be raising tag numbers."

Reports from Red Oak suggest "there are a very large percentage of bears there on private ground," Thorman said, and he's not convinced this year's underharvest is a signal things are stabilizing.

"I think the reason they're down is because I don't think there's as many bears as the DNR thinks there are," Thorman said. "The numbers are down and that's why I think the kill is down."

"There's not the bears on public land that they think," he said.

In the Baldwin BMU, "they've overharvested those bears," Thorman said. "They've killed too many."

"They've more than doubled the tags there the last few years," he said. "The population is definitely trending down in Baldwin, no question about that." 



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## Directors prep for MBHA's 2024 convention at Shanty Creek in March

By Victor Skinner

In just three short months, the Michigan Bear Hunters Association will host hundreds of hunters and their families in the Michigan northwoods for an annual tradition that dates back decades.

Preparations are underway for the Michigan Bear Hunters Association's convention at Shanty Creek Resort on March 1 and 2, with 2024 marking several consecutive years at the Bellaire, Michigan location named after an old trapper's shanty.

"After last year's sold out success, expectations for this year are high and I have no doubt those who attend will not be disappointed," MBHA President Keith Shafer said. "We have loads of prizes, engaging speakers, a prime rib dinner, and plenty of fellowship lined up – all focused on raising as much money as we can to preserve black bears and our cherished hunting heritage."

The 2024 event will feature the return of the popular Bear Stomp, a Friday night dance party designed to kick off the festivities.

The convention and kids program will open up on Saturday with presentations that offer something for everyone. MBHA directors are still finalizing the details, but the convention will feature two keynote speakers with interesting perspectives on bear or hound hunting in Michigan, as well as numerous raffles, merchandise, vendors, and games with hundreds of prizes, from high quality firearms to the latest hunting and outdoor equipment.

The biggest giveaways come from the MBHA Warchest Raffle, with tickets set to go on sale by the new year. Last year's Warchest alone included more than \$24,000 in prizes, offering a shot at a Polaris 570 Sportsman ATV, a fat tire electric bike, Polaris generator, \$1,300 in total cash prizes, in addition to numerous Garmin devices, firearms, tool sets, and even half a cow.

Information about the Warchest Raffle and the MBHA's famed 52-Gun Raffle is available on the MBHA's website, [MIBearHunters.org](http://MIBearHunters.org).

The daytime speakers will coincide with a youth program aimed at educating youngsters about our natural world while providing an array of prizes to get them engaged in the outdoors. The 2023 event featured Whispering Pines Mobile Zoo, which offered kids a hands-on experience with pigmy goats, tortoises, an alligator, an African serval, snakes and other creatures, while previous years have included presentations on dog sledding, and Michigan's native species.

MBHA organizers are gearing up for an equally engaging experience at the 2024 convention, ensuring each of the kids



*The MBHA convention will return to Shanty Creek Resort on March 1-2, 2024.*

who attend head back with a full stomach, quality prize and a smile on their face.

The 2024 convention will also feature the return of a hunters education course on Sunday for kids and adults to prepare for the 2024 season. Department of Natural Resources officials will attend the course to help guide participants through the process. The MBHA hosted both trappers education and hunters education courses during the 2023 convention for the first time, and attendance was unexpectedly high with a turnout that translated into roughly 60 certificates issued over two days.

"I expected to get maybe 10 and we had a waiting list because we ran out of seats for hunters ed," DNR educator Ed Shaw said.

During the mid-day break from the kids and adult programs, the MBHA will host free tubing for attendees on Shanty Creek's slopes.

The daytime events will be followed by an evening dinner program that has drawn more than 500 hunters, lawmakers, DNR officials, Natural Resource Commission members, and conservation leaders from across the state in recent years.

The evening gathering provides a chance for MBHA members to engage directly with the folks who shape Michigan's outdoor policy.

"Unlike many other hunting conventions, the MBHA convention is designed to ensure our members know how conservation works in Michigan, and to connect them with the decision-makers," Shafer said. "It's a unique opportunity to talk with and gain insights from the DNR officials who manage Michigan black bears, as well as policymakers in Lansing who guide their work."

Conservation leaders will also address the convention during the evening program to discuss the state of politics impacting bear hunters and hunting rights, which faced headwinds in 2023 with numerous gun restrictions approved by state lawmakers.

Other updates will include the MBHA's work advocating on behalf of Michigan bear hunters, from monitoring state and federal






legislation to the latest on MBHA-sponsored petitions to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to remove wolves from Endangered Species Act protections.

MBHA directors will also give out the annual Big Bear Awards for the heftiest bruins harvested this year, MBHA-Bill Walker Scholarships for college bound students with a passion for the outdoors, and announce winners for the MBHA's annual Bear Management Cooperator Patch Contest.

The MBHA will also recognize youth hunters who harvested bears in 2023 through a new program continued from last year aimed at highlighting the next generation.

Successful youth hunters can send in a picture and statistics of their harvest to receive an official MBHA certificate acknowledging their achievement that will be featured on a board displayed at the convention.

Interested youngsters can email a photo with their name, age, location, weight and summary of their hunt to [kidsprogram@MIBearHunters.org](mailto:kidsprogram@MIBearHunters.org).

"The 2024 convention is going to be awesome, with engaging discussions on the nuts and bolts of bear hunting, to the insights on the currents moving Michigan outdoor politics, to the fellowship between hunters and their families," Shafer said. "The best part is it's designed to put our money where our mouth is by raising funds to preserve black bears and the hunting traditions we all cherish – and nobody does it quite like the MBHA!" 



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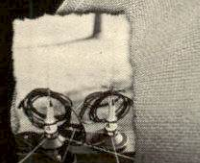
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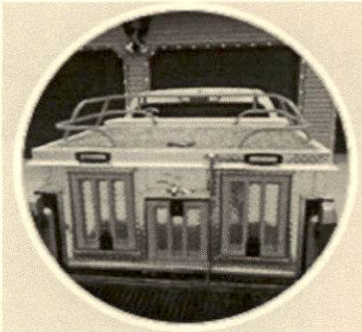
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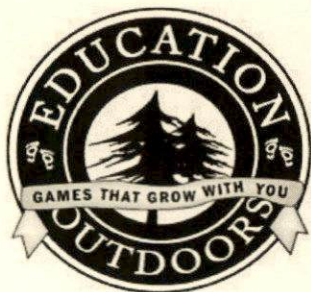
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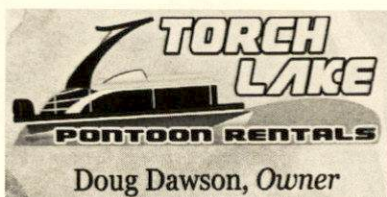


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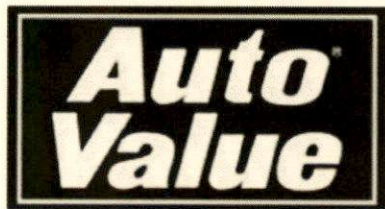
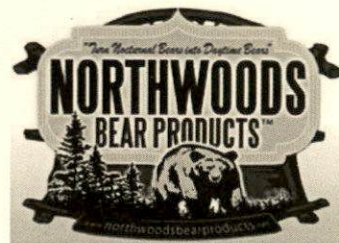
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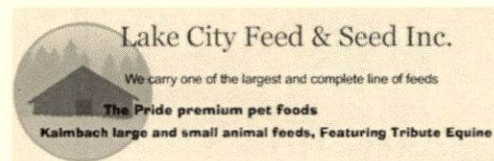


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# MBHA/Bill Walker - Scholarship Application

Application Deadline: December 31, 2024

## I. ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

Social Security Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ MI: \_\_\_\_\_ Last: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone Number: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Secondary School Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Accounting Department Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

School Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Student Account Number: \_\_\_\_\_

## II. CAREER INFORMATION

Name of College/Technical Institute: \_\_\_\_\_

Major/Vocation: \_\_\_\_\_

## III. MBHA INFORMATION

(You do not need to be a member of MBHA)

Approximate starting date of MBHA membership: \_\_\_\_\_

Dependent of a MBHA member/relationship to the member: \_\_\_\_\_

Members Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Approximate starting date of MBHA membership: \_\_\_\_\_





# MBHA/Bill Walker - Scholarship Application

Application Deadline: December 31, 2024

## IV. ACADEMIC INFORMATION

Submit an official transcript.

To be official: The high school transcript must be an original document that includes the high school seal or the signature of a high school official. The college or technical institute transcript must be printed on security sensitive paper and contain the university seal and the signature of the university registrar. Copies or computer print-outs will not be accepted as OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPTS.

## V. NARRATIVE

Attach a one page narrative - no more than 300 words - in response to each of the following questions:

- What are your views on hunting and on natural resources?
- What are your career aspirations?

## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

To assist the MBHA scholarship board in the selection of scholarship recipients, please provide two written recommendations.

Letters of recommendation must be dated after Jan. 14, 2024.

## CERTIFICATION

I certify that all information contained in this nomination form is true and factual. I agree that MBHA may use my name and likeness and any other information or materials provided by me in connection to this organization for purposes of news, publicity and advertising mail media, including but not limited to, print and electronic media and Internet web-sites.

Signature of Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

### Submit the following unfolded in a manila envelope:

1. Scholarship Application Form
  2. Complete Narrative
  3. Two Letters of Recommendation
  4. **Official** High School or College/Technical Institute Transcript
- Individual must have a G.P.A. of 2.0 or better.
  - Mail Application to: Sandra May, 565 East Sheldon Street, Gaylord, MI 49735. (Please call 248-854-6273 with any questions prior to submission date.)
  - Successful recipients will receive a single one-time scholarship and will be asked to attend our annual convention in March. Recipient will receive a free ticket to the convention and banquet.
  - Scholarship money may be used only to attend a college or technical institute. MBHA sends all award money directly to the institution.





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We need your help to strengthen the Michigan Bear Hunters Association and Michigan Bear Hunters Conservation Association. Sign up your friends and relatives and invite them to go hunting with you or to one of many MBHA - Sponsored events. As an added incentive, for every new member you sign up, your name will be entered into a drawing to win. Once we have 15 names in the hat we'll draw for a winner at one of our bi-monthly meetings. The winner will receive two dinner tickets to our annual convention. Mail your membership to: Phil Hewitt, 7796 Ainsworth Rd. Lake Odessa, MI 48849

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