

ISSUE 8 - August 2025

TRACKER

MICHIGAN CHAPTER SCI

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SCI'S PURPOSE AND INTENT

- A. To promote good fellowship among all who love the outdoors and hunting.
- B. To promote conservation of the world's renewable wildlife resources, recognizing hunting as one of the many management tools.
- C. To educate youth, sportsmen and the public in conservation of our wildlife and our forests, which are our natural heritage.
- D. To share our hunting experiences and information among our membership.
- E. To operate the association as a non-profit organization, consistent with its charitable purposes, while providing enjoyment for our members, always with the goal of helping to conserve the animals that we love to hunt today for those who will come to love the sport tomorrow.

SCI'S CODES OF ETHICS

Recognizing my responsibilities to wildlife, habitat and future generations, I pledge:

- A. To conduct myself in the field so as to make a positive contribution to wildlife and ecosystems.
- B. To improve my skills as a woodsman and marksman to ensure humane harvesting of wildlife.
- C. To comply with all game laws in the spirit of fair chase, and to influence my companions accordingly.
- D. To accept my responsibility to provide all possible assistance to game law enforcement officers.
- E. To waste no opportunity to teach young people the full meaning of this code of ethics.
- F. To reflect in word and behavior only credit upon the fraternity of sportsmen, and to demonstrate abiding respect for game, habitat and property where I am privileged to hunt.

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Sportsmen for Youth and Disabled Veterans





STS AND FAMILY

the sheer volume of how much so fast. Situations which once lose their sharpness and und, lost in the blur of routine



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CROSSBOW BOLTS AND BEARS

I was the winning bidder for Chris Cook's, of Cook's Outfitting, black bear hunt donation to the Michigan Safari Club auction in 2024. When I arrived at camp, Chris showed me pictures of several bears that were actively hitting baits. Four of them stood out as bears I'd take on the first day.



20

DON'T DELAY!

EDITOR'S NOTES



Welcome to the Summer Issue of the Tracker. SCI Michigan Chapter members, this is your magazine. I'd like to extend a big thank you to the members contributing to this issue. Terry Blauwkamp and Steve Kernosky provide important information on legal ammo and guns for Southern Michigan deer hunting in the Another Day at the Range column. Joe Guinn relates his fun, funny, and successful bear hunts with chapter supporter Chris Cook (Cook's Outfitting) for our enjoyment. Dakoyta Greenman gives us pause to think about and cherish our time in the field and the joys of the people with whom we spend that time as he tells a story of "firsts" in the turkey woods. Edward Lewis recounts the establishment of the Croton Sportsman for Youth and Disabled Veterans and the important role the SCI Michigan Chapter has played in this organization. President Mike Kwast gives us an update on some of the many ways that we, as a chapter, are having an impact in our own community, state, nationally, and internationally.

As you read this issue, summer will be nearing an end. This means many will have just returned from hunts south of the Equator. Others will be working on getting in shape for the hunting seasons soon to arrive in the Northern Hemisphere. If you've recently gone on a hunt with one of our supporting outfitters we'd love to read about it. From youth hunts, to the Big Five in Africa, we'd love to read your story. Please keep us in mind as you venture out this fall. As editor, I am very appreciative of those who take the time to share their adventures with us. Without you this magazine wouldn't be possible. We are always looking for more member trophy photos and interesting trail cam pics as well.

Please note that we do reserve the right, in our sole discretion, to edit or refuse any submission. If you would like to submit an article or pictures, please send them to me at: trmoelker@gmail.com or 5132 20th Ave Hudsonville, MI 49426 or call me at 616-889-1003.

Thank you,

Todd Moelker, Editor

CORRECTIONS: Two articles were attributed to Pete VanderArk, our long time, but now retired, copy editor. The great story, Tom Foolery, was written by Greg Kurdys. The recap of Big Buck Night was written by Todd Moelker.

**Hello Everyone,
I hope you're enjoying a great
summer! SCI Michigan, in partnership
with Captain Tim of Powderhorn
Sportfishing, has had a fantastic
season. They host fishing trips
for disadvantaged youth on Lake
Michigan—completely free for the
kids, thanks to our chapter and your
generous support.**

Introducing young people to the outdoors through hunting and fishing remains one of our top priorities.

At every member meeting, we've raffled a .22 rifle—free to attendees aged 21 and under—which has become a very anticipated highlight. The joy on a young winner's face is always unforgettable! Special thanks to Two Hats Ranch for donating two youth hunts, which were raffled to new SCI Michigan youth members.

Our chapter also proudly sponsored three participants for the "First Time Hunter" program at Legends Ranch. Former chapter president and current Senator Jon Bumstead has introduced legislation to reintegrate hunter safety education into public schools—a move we are eagerly watching and fully support.

We're excited to share that, in collaboration with several other Michigan chapters, SCI Michigan funded the launch of a for-credit Hunting and Conservation course at Michigan State University. This course showcases the vital role hunting plays in conservation. Additionally, we've provided three scholarship grants to graduate students in natural resources who support and advocate for hunting—helping to shape the next generation of conservation leaders.

With the Michigan DNR reporting a decline in hunter participation, recruiting and mentoring new hunters is more important than ever. I'm incredibly proud of all we've accomplished. Looking ahead, I am even more excited about what is to come.

Our mission—Preserve, Promote, Protect hunting—is at the core of everything we do. Thank you to all our members for making these initiatives possible. If you'd like to get more involved, we welcome your time, skills, and support. Together, we can do even more.

Dr. Mike Kwast



ATTENTION SCI Michigan Members

Important information for our members such as chapter events, meetings and membership renewals will be emailed to every member that we have an email address for. If you didn't get an email reminder of our last meeting we do not have your email address. Please send your email to mvghareeb@gmail.com so we can get all of our emails on the list.

MICHIGAN CHAPTER UPCOMING EVENTS

Friday, August 8th

Member Challenge Shoot at Two Hats Ranch

Thursday, October 9th

Member Dinner & Program



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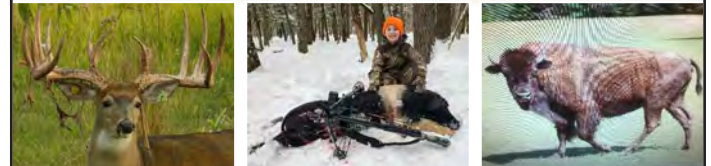
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In the last issue of the Tracker Magazine, we as a board thanked everyone that generously supported us at our February banquet and fundraiser.



MAKING A DIFFERENCE

STORY BY PETE MIEDEMA

FOR THE BOARD OF SCI WEST MICHIGAN BOW HUNTERS CHAPTER



The West Michigan Bowhunters have been working hard to bring the great outdoors to more people and conserve wildlife habitats.



We thought we would give everyone a look at our 2025 roadmap, detailing how we are using our funds to promote the outdoor lifestyle and support those less fortunate.

Our nonprofit partners for 2025 are as follows: Sportsperson Ministries: SPM has been very involved with our youth. Through Hunter Safety range days, they engage approximately 500 youth throughout the year. SPM also runs a high school and middle school fishing tournament trail engaging close to 100 high school teams and 50 middle school teams. SPM also holds a camp at CranHill Ranch (Rodney, MI) introducing youth to archery and shooting experiences.

The Full Draw archery camp for kids is held at the Haymarsh Hunt Club in Mecosta County. We sponsor youth through scholarships for students in need.

Wings of Freedom and Zero Day helping veterans and Wounded Warriors.

Centershot Youth Archery team coached by Bob Fritz introducing youth to archery through the National Archery In The Schools Program "NASP".

Hunt 2 Heal. A non-profit providing safe and comfortable outdoor experiences to people with disabilities to improve mental health.

SCI and West Michigan Bow Hunters are all about "First for Hunters." Your SCI-West Michigan Bowhunters is also involved in National Projects. We are assisting SCI Alaska and the State of Alaska in their fight to keep hunting and fishing decisions at the State level rather than the Federal level. West Michigan Bowhunters was the top revenue producer in the State of Michigan and in the top ten worldwide out of 140 chapters.

Hope this article finds all our friends healthy and happy. Please continue to support us so that we can help and assist those helping our friends and families in the outdoors.



MICHIGAN ZONE 3 DEER HUNTING FIREARM CHOICES

Cartridge	Bullet Dia. (in.)	Bullet Wt. (grs.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	100 yd. performance		Rifle Action Types
.350 Legend	.357	150	2325	1970	1290	BA, SS, AR
		165	2200	1890	1310	
		180	2100	1760	1240	
.360 Buckhammer	.358	180	2400	2020	1630	LA, SS
		200	2200	1780	1410	
.400 Legend	.400	190	2250	N/A		BA, SS, AR
		215		1870	1670	
.450 Bushmaster	.452	250	2200	1830	1860	BA, SS, AR
.30/30 Winchester	.308	160	2400	2150	1640	

The 2025 Michigan firearm deer season is approaching. For those looking at buying a new rifle or shotgun for hunting in Lower Michigan (known as the Limited Firearm Zone, LFZ) now is the time to act. This article examines the choices available.

Broadly speaking, there are two categories for the LFZ: straight-wall cartridges and shotgun cartridges. Some years ago Michigan legalized straight-wall centerfire cartridges for deer hunting in what was traditionally the shotgun only zone. The restriction is based on the length of the case which must fall between 1.16 and 1.80 inches and must be .35 caliber or larger. Cartridges that meet this requirement include .357 Magnum, .350 Legend, .360 Buckhammer, .400 Legend, .450 Bushmaster, .41 Magnum, and .44 Magnum.

Cartridges that DO NOT meet the criteria include .375 Winchester, .444 Marlin, and .45/70.

We are going to focus on the four cartridges shown above by examining their ballistics and the type of firearms available. A comparison of these four cartridges will be built upon the .30/30 Winchester which was selected based on its ballistics and history of deer hunting.

Beginning with the .350 Legend, introduced by Winchester in 2019,

we see its velocity to 100 yards is approximately 90% that of the .30/30 for similar bullet weight. Winchester, Hornady, and Federal all offer at least two loadings for this cartridge giving many choices. At least six firearm manufacturers including Ruger, Mossberg, Winchester, and Weatherby chamber various rifles for this caliber. Thus, the .350 Legend perhaps has the most options available. Moving to the .360 Buckhammer, this cartridge was introduced by Remington in 2023. It is based on the .30/30 case and is the only rimmed cartridge being examined. Energy at 100 yards with a 180 grain bullet is identical to the .30/30. At this time it appears only Remington and Federal load ammunition for the .360 and bullet weights are typically 180 grains and higher. Given that it is a rimmed cartridge, there are fewer rifle choices for the .360. Henry offers several lever action models and there are a couple single shot rifles available. Considering factory ammunition and rifle manufacturers, at this time the .360 offers the fewest choices. The .400 Legend was introduced in 2023 by Winchester. Typical loading is a 215 grain bullet at 2250 fps muzzle velocity. The energy for the 215 grain bullet at 100 yards is identical to the 160 grain .30/30. At this time only Winchester offers factory loaded ammunition but there are indications Remington will produce one hunting load. There are many companies offering rifles chambered



for the .400 Legend giving the shooter many choices among bolt action, single shot, and AR uppers (Bear Creek Arsenal, for example). Thus, the .400 Legend has many options available.

This brings us to the .450 Bushmaster which has been around since approximately 2009. The typical loading is a 250 grain bullet at 2200 fps muzzle velocity. Velocity and energy at 100 yards are 1830 fps and 1860 ft.-lbs., respectively, making it the most powerful cartridge under consideration. However, this will come at the price of recoil. At least six rifle manufacturers' chamber for the .450 and at least two, Ruger and Savage, include a muzzle brake with their rifles to address the recoil issue. Ammunition is available from all the major manufacturers as well as some other sources giving the shooter many choices. Trajectory can be examined by first recognizing that the case length specification for these four cartridges restricts velocity due to case capacity. In turn, the cartridges are typically loaded with light-for-caliber projectiles to achieve higher velocity. These two factors have a significant effect on trajectory. When compared to the 160 grain .30/30, all four cartridges will have noticeably more drop for any given scenario. For example, if zeroed at 100 yards, all four will drop 8-9 inches at 200 yards. Realistically, these straight-wall cartridges have a practical range of 125 yards given a 100 yard zero. This statement is based on getting proper bullet placement on the shoulder of a typical whitetail.

Ammunition for the Bushmaster is approximately \$2.00 per round while the others are approximately \$1.75 per round for most practical hunting loads. Regarding factory ammunition, it is highly recommended to buy several boxes of the same lot. Extensive testing with .450 Bushmaster showed the point of impact is sensitive to average velocity (there isn't any reason to believe it wouldn't apply to the other cartridges). Once sighted in, having

enough ammo of the same lot helps ensure consistency and the process of making sure the rifle is properly sighted in will be easier year-after-year.

Now, let's not forget those still shooting shotguns during deer season. For the shotgun cartridges, there are two options (buckshot is not considered in this article): sabot ammunition designed to be fired from rifled barrels (technically making the shotgun a rifle) and smoothbore options.

For the smoothbore route, these are commonly known as "rifled slugs". These have been around for many years and are still a very viable choice. On a technical side these projectiles, formally called Foster type slugs, do not spin. The rifling molded into the projectile is for marketing and the projectiles are mass-stabilized. Think of a badminton birdie that always flies nose first: same principle and the results speak for themselves. With a cylinder bore barrel and a good optic, these once-ounce slugs (437 grains at 1600 fps) are very accurate to 75 yards and deadly. The ammunition is significantly less expensive than the other shotgun options allowing practice without breaking the bank. Good Foster type rifled slugs (Winchester, Remington, and Federal) cost approximately \$1.25 per round while some fancy versions (e.g. Brenneke) cost double that amount. At these prices, the shooter can buy several brands and see what shoots best in his/her firearm.

For the rifled barrel choice, the sabot rounds employ sub-caliber projectiles enclosed in a plastic sleeve that discards when fired. These projectiles are spin-stabilized and thus require a rifled barrel and at \$3.00 - \$5.00 per round are the most expensive

option. At 2000 fps muzzle velocity, a 300 grain projectile has energy equal to the .450 Bushmaster at 100 yards. For trajectory, with a 100 yard zero the drop at 200 yards exceeds that of the straight-wall cartridges. Given the cost and availability of shotgun slug equipment (barrels and firearms), it isn't likely someone getting into deer hunting would choose this route over the straight-wall cartridges. However, for someone that already has the proper firearm, the shotgun slug is certainly viable.

From the 165 grain .350 Legend to the once-ounce shotgun slug, there are many choices for the Michigan LFZ hunter. Cost, performance, and recoil are just a few of the considerations. Whatever your choice, always think bullet placement on the shoulder.



April Monthly Dinner Round Up

STORY BY TODD MOELKER

Chapter President Mike Kwast greeted the 70 plus members and guests who came out for another great evening of fun, fellowship, and food



Mike reviewed some of the great work we've been doing and gave a big thank you to each and every one who made the annual fundraiser convention a big success! A sign-up sheet was passed around to give members the opportunity to assist on one or more of the youth fishing charters we sponsor. Reminders were given that we can always use more volunteers and members willing to run for the board. After another delicious dinner, Scott Bylsma gave a short program about a recent trip to New Zealand. Scott and Patty Bylsma, along with long time chapter members Randy and Lori Schultz hunted with New Zealand Hunting Adventures. New Zealand Hunting Adventures is a supporter of our chapter and donates to our fundraiser. The Bylsma's and Schultz's had a great time and thoroughly enjoyed the hunting, beautiful scenery, lodging, and food. After the program, it was time to draw for the lucky youth winners of the two management deer hunts at Two Hats Ranch. This is one more way that we are working to get our youth involved in hunting. The lucky winners were Mary Tait and Jackson Baareman. We weren't done with winners just yet! Mary Tait's brother Luke won the youth gun raffle. Rick Hansen won the jewelry, and Patty Bylsma won the adult gun raffle.

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FEATHERS, FIRSTS, AND FAMILY

A Turkey Tale Worth Telling

STORY BY DAKOYTA GREENMAN

It never ceases to amaze me the sheer volume of how much I have forgotten. Life moves so fast. Situations which once seemed insurmountable slowly lose their sharpness and quietly slip into the background, lost in the blur of routine and responsibility. Over time, that mental archive of lost and now ill-defined moments ranging from treasured to trivial, eventually fall into the autumn of perspective. But in that quiet realization, I've come to appreciate two simple truths: first, when you are in a situation which has the opportunity for peace, slow yourself down intentionally and purposefully. Let your mind breathe. And second, make it a point to identify and reflect on your "firsts." As life marches on, they become fewer and farther between. The older I get, the more I crave those moments, for both myself and my family. It shakes us out of habit and reminds us what the foundation of joy truly is.

Earlier last year, I was fortunate enough to meet the Weiss family through work. With a mutual love for the outdoors, they warmly and without hesitation invited me to hunt on their family farm located near Lansing. A farm that has been in their family for over a century. That alone is coveted for any outdoorsman, but their hospitality was not limited to a deer hunt. Without prompting from me, they extended an invitation to do a spring turkey hunt at their farm and welcomed the thought of me bringing my 7-year-old son, Elliott. This would signify his first hunt and my first turkey hunt!

We were up sharply at 4 a.m. the morning of the hunt. We had a 2-hour drive ahead of us.



Father and son tag a successful turkey harvest together—passing down tradition, patience, and the love of the outdoors to the next generation.



As I awoke with an excitement that I haven't felt in a long time, I left my room to find Elliott was already waiting at the top of the stairs, radiating the kind of unfiltered excitement only kids seem to have the ability to project. While he fell asleep in the truck, I had time for reflection. My thoughts reminding me to let go of the deadlines, the chores, and the unknowns of life outside of this hunt. Today, I told myself, was about being present for me, and for him.

We met Matt Weiss when we arrived and rode a few hundred yards to the spot where he'd scouted birds. On the way in, we were welcomed by about eight deer, watching us with ease like domestic cows. We got within 40-50 yards before they bounded to the north side of the field and looked back. It was certainly an opening act for the blessing of what was to come.

I've always been an unapologetic big game hunter and have paid little attention

to small game. Growing up, I never really spent time hunting small game or birds, so this style of hunting, while familiar, had elements which were slightly foreign. In reflection, I think it provided a unique opportunity for us in our first turkey hunt together, which overall made it richer. The active calling and response (which we were to expect) almost instinctively made me freeze up and not move a muscle.

Not long after we set up, Matt started calling. A tom responded almost immediately from the thicket behind us. Over the next 45 minutes, we went back and forth with him until two hens appeared to the north of Matt's blind. Once they presented themselves to the playing field, they wasted no time and made a beeline for the decoys. To my and Elliott's surprise, the hens started savagely attacking them, kicking them off their stands, and scratching at them until satisfied these interlopers were sufficiently dealt with. Elliott sat perfectly still, wide-eyed but focused. We whispered

back and forth about why in the world I couldn't shoot one of those turkeys. While not clearly understanding Dad's logic, he kept to quiet contempt, and we anxiously waited for what would come next.

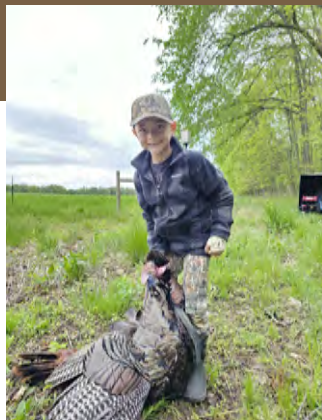
Just as the hens began to wander off, I caught movement over Elliott's shoulder, barely three feet from our blind. The pale head of a tom, puffed up and gobbling, was visible. Elliott somehow stayed calm and still as stone. We both watched in awe. The tom, however, stood between our blind and Matt. A shot now risked a huge trophy and an explanation to Matt's wife as to the state of her husband! Almost through a mental link, Matt and I shared a mutual understanding of patience and waiting to see what this bird does.

Luckily, I didn't have to test our patience for long as the tom eventually drifted far enough out to give a clear and safe shot. We harvested a quad-bearded tom with the longest beard just over 10 inches. I looked over at my

son and saw something that went deeper than just excitement. It was pride. It was connection. It was something near primal. It was a first I am hopeful he will carry with him for life.

It's easy to say the hunt went smoothly. But as most hunters know, the real win wasn't the turkey. It was the chance to share something pure and real. No screens. No distractions. Just a father and son, learning together. Being together. It was about time well spent, not time saved.

I would like to take a moment and express a sincere thank you to the Weiss family for your generosity, and the space you gave us to write this memory. And to Elliott: when life gets messy or hard, when adulthood weighs heavy, let this memory be a reminder of that early morning joy, that stillness in the blind, and the fire that sparked inside you. You were amazing out there. And just so you know forever—Dad will always love you.



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Archery and Hunting Gear Update

REPORT BY PETE MIEDEMA OF LONG RANGE ARCHERY AND FIREARMS

DON'T DELAY

The 2025 fall season will be here before we know it. There are things to consider as we look ahead. Keep in mind that prices are changing rapidly due to tariffs and freight issues. Also, do not hesitate to decide on items you may need for an upcoming hunt as the supply chain has many resemblances to the covid days of tight supply. Many manufacturers have held off from shipping products due to instability in calculating their end costs because of tariffs and shipping container costs. This fall will be a crap shoot as to what will be available on a timely basis.

New items to be aware of in the fast-changing world of optics. The hot tickets right now are image stabilized binos by Sig Sauer and Kite Optics. Vortex and Swarovski have come out with a line of compact spotting scopes in both straight as well as angled models. MagView and Painted Arrow will adapt your phone to be used with spotting scopes, binos and tripods. Leupold now has a range finder that will download into ONYX Hunt mapping software. Last but not least, check out the range finding binos by Swarovski, Vortex and Revic.



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May Monthly Dinner Round Up

STORY BY TODD MOELKER

Chapter President Mike Kwast opened with some updates and comments about who we are as a chapter, some of our accomplishments, and our goals. The reminder was once again given that without your help none of this would be possible.



It was reported that an unfortunate error left a name off the board member ballots. After consulting with our legal advisor, it was decided to cancel the election this year and carry over the current board till next year.

Our May meeting was sponsored by Aaron Hollister, Fireside Financial Partners. Thank you, Aaron, for your continued support of our Chapter. Let's thank our generous sponsors by patronizing them.

David Droge, From Fourth Arrow, Haymarsh Hunt Club, and Raised At Full Draw Youth Camps led in the Pledge of Allegiance and opened in prayer. After which, we enjoyed a great pulled pork and pulled chicken dinner.

Our program included two parts and focused on our youth. David Droge gave an update on the Raised at Full Draw youth camp program, at Haymarsh Hunt Club, where the campers are

taught how to bow hunt and to do it safely. These camps prepare the next generation to carry on our great hunting traditions. Our chapter presented David Droge with a check for \$5,000 to support this great cause.

Next up were Tyler Wildman and Michael Fitzner. They have a podcast, Tru2Shooters, promoting youth in competitive shotgun sports and are also leading competitive shooters themselves. They talked about how they got into competitive shooting and encouraged our young members to join the shooting sports. Tyler started his competitive shooting with the Kent County Orange Crushers, an organization we support.

After the program, it was time for some winners. The youth gun winner was Anna Tait. The jewelry winner was Ty Ricord with his great Aunt Sue Ellen McCreary. The gun winner was Aaron Hollister.

WE ARE DOERS

Our kids are the future of hunting. As a chapter, we are active in recruiting youths into our great passion for the outdoors.

At each monthly meeting we have a free raffle for a gun, just for our kids. Denny Sprik, our humanitarian chair along with Captain Tim Becker, provide many free fishing charters for kids with the funds you, our members, donate. For many of these kids, this is their first exposure to outdoor sports. Our Michigan SCI Chapter sponsors the Orange Crush youth shotgun sports team as well as the Raised at Full Draw archery camps. We also celebrate with our youth when they are successful in the field and in competitive shooting sports. Here are some pictures of our youth enjoying the outdoors. As editor, I apologize not having the young man's name who shot this great bear! If someone can get me his name, I'd love to include it in the next issue.



Brooklyn and Grandpa
Tom spending time
Turkey hunting.



Orange Crush Team Tyler
Sporting his medals.

CROSSBOWS

BOLTS & BEARS

As told by Joe Guinn to Todd Moelker
I was the winning bidder of the black bear hunt donated by Chris Cook (owner) of Cooks Outfitting based in Saskatchewan Canada. I won the hunt at the Michigan Chapter Safari Club's 2024 fundraiser. When I arrived at camp, Chris showed me pictures of several bears actively hitting baits.

STORY BY JOE GUINN



Four of them stood out as bears I'd take on the first day. With great excitement, I climbed into the stand! I'd been practicing with my crossbow and knew that it was really dialed in. In fact, my practice sessions would involve shooting each practice bolt, out to forty yards, at a different bullseye to avoid the costly success of shafting and ruining the bolts. Well, wouldn't you know it, one of the four bears I was interested in showed up and offered a shot. The shot hit further back than planned and we didn't recover the bear till morning. The whole trip home I was puzzled by the bad hit. I went back to the archery shop to have them check out my crossbow. The crossbow cable exploded while the bow technician was cocking it! The very last shot from that crossbow accounted for my bear! After further investigation, it was determined the cable had somehow become frayed,

resulting in the hit that was too far back. After some procrastination, I decided to book another bear hunt with Cooks Outfitting. The available hunt dates were over Memorial Day weekend and into the next week encompassing Memorial Day. Expecting heavy traffic around the holiday, I chose to take the northern route to Saskatchewan. I enjoyed a leisurely three-day drive to camp. On this hunt, I shared camp with a younger couple from Texas and a couple guys from the Upper Peninsula. Around 2 p.m. we'd get ready to go. Chris drove the Texas couple and myself to our stands. We'd go as far as we could in his truck and then take a UTV, with a small trailer behind it, the rest of the way. I'd usually start hunting around 4 p.m. and hunt till dark which was around 10 p.m. After a few days of hunting, things were getting into a routine. We were all seeing bears and I had a certain brown

color phase bear that I really wanted. This is where the story gets very interesting, comical, embarrassing, and also successful! Chris brought me to the tree stand I'd be using to hopefully get a shot at the brown phase bear I'd set my heart on. Well, the bears were moving early, and we bumped a sow and the brown phase bear while getting to the tree stand. What was worse, I did not realize I'd forgotten my crossbow bolts until I got into the tree stand! I was sure they were just back at the trailer that Chris pulls behind the UTV. I stayed in the tree stand and Chris went back for my bolts, but the bolts weren't in the trailer and Chris had to go all the way back to the truck! I'm guessing that many who are reading this can already write the next chapter. Of course, the sow and brown phase bear came right back out and enjoyed a leisurely dinner while I looked on helplessly.



When Chris returned, the bears spooked and ran off. At this point, I was worried they wouldn't return as they had already fed for quite a while. A short time later, a small bear came in, fed, and then left. After sitting for quite some time I needed to stand and stretch. Of course, as soon as I stood up a bear suddenly appeared. It wasn't the brown phase bear, but it looked like a pretty good one just the same. My adrenaline spiked. I clunked my crossbow on the stand which got the bear's attention, and he started walking away. I was able to get off a shot when he stopped to look back. The shot was good. He only ran a short distance out of sight. I heard the death moan and knew I had my bear! Chris told me to stay in my stand and wait for him before going to look for the bear. I knew it was dead. I got down and found him. Well, I gotta say, there was some ground shrinkage. He wasn't as big as I'd thought. We got the bear back to camp where Chris skinned, butchered, and packed the meat. It wasn't a huge bear, but I had a cooler of meat and a very nice bear skin which was quite satisfying after the craziness of the forgotten bolts! The next day, four of us went fishing and caught a nice mess of pike. This was a great way to end my time in bear camp.

There was a forest fire burning in the provincial park north of camp. The day we went fishing the Canadian government closed the park to all ATVs which we needed to get back to our stands, so I decided to leave on the long drive home the next morning. During the night I was awakened by the smell of smoke. Turns out the wind had changed direction and the fire was now just two hours from camp. Chris and the other guide helped me pack up my stuff and I hit the road. The smoke followed me all the way to Regina, Saskatchewan. However, the rest of the drive home was uneventful. A hunt is so much more than just the kill. I met some great people from Texas and the U.P. and did some fishing. I would say that was a win, win, win!

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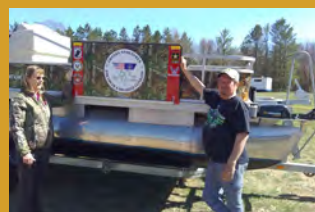
In late October 2009, a veteran friend of mine and I joined together to organize a special appreciation event honoring our disabled veteran brothers. This event became known as “Hookin’ Up Heroes”. It entailed a fishing tournament which also included a motorcycle run with a hog roast, auction, and live music. All proceeds were to be donated to an organization helping veterans. In 2010, we reached out to people familiar with different aspects of the planned event. As with most newly organizational events, there were adjustments and changes suggested and needed. All in all, it ended well and we learned a great deal. As 2011 started, we began receiving additional volunteer offers from folks outside our normal volunteer group. Unfortunately, we had many who wanted to utilize our resources and platform for purposes not aligned with our “organizations vision.”

In 2012, our planning meeting did not go in the direction I had hoped. I decided to part ways with the group and opted to utilize my experience as a boat captain--joining in the excitement and commitment of taking veterans fishing on my boat. This is one of the most rewarding experiences ever! Seeing the joy and excitement that came into play working with fellow veterans has been overwhelmingly positive. I decided, on the spot, this important event has got to continue. Now established as “Hookin’ Up Veterans” it is in its 16th year of operation. The organization “Hookin’ Up Heroes” disbanded in 2012. Now came 2013. This was all still very new to me and I had no

“wingman.” However, I do have divine leadership and guidance. With that said, opportunities and people were entering into positions that would soon start everything falling into place! The first to emerge was Denny Sprick. Denny was manning the SCI Michigan Chapter trailer at the Grand Rapids Home for Veterans Carnival event. I introduced myself and our organization to Denny. We had a very rewarding conversation in the sense that it enlightened me as to the mission of SCI and their organization’s desire to help folks like me. Not only did I have a new friend, but the whole SCI Organization of which I am now a life member. I am also the Newaygo County coordinator for the DNR hunter safety program and current president/founder of Croton Sportsmen for Youth and Disabled Veterans (CSYDV). That said, we support youth programs as well. Offering archery, gun safety, crossbow, and fishing. These programs require equipment. Previously, I was using \$30 BB guns. They did the job. However, they required a great deal of maintenance. I explained this to my new friend, Mr. Sprick. He suggested I write a letter to the SCI Michigan Chapter board and request some support, which I did. Not long after we received new pellet rifles! They were top shelf equipment. I had been supporting this project out of my personal funds from the beginning. It was growing more difficult and becoming too much from my income to provide the level of support I needed. So, I did all the paperwork, paid “the man,” and we are now a 501(c) (3). Over this period, I had several veteran friends join me on a volunteer basis.

A bit of background and history allows you to see how our current organization has been instrumental in supporting our deserving veterans.

STORY BY EDWARD LEWIS



They all had pontoon boats. We were able to take more kids and veterans fishing. Unfortunately, there were folks being left out because they were in wheelchairs. This needed to change. I designed a fold-up wheelchair ramp that attaches to the boat. It needed to be lightweight but strong. I reached out to some folks with my ramp design plan including the aluminum diamond plate with other needed materials required to complete the project. Wonderful people with vision provided donations to "get the job done." We could now take someone in a wheelchair out on the water. In 2014, a request to take 2 wheelchairs came about. To accomplish this task, we needed another boat with a wheelchair ramp. Hello Mr. Sprick and SCI. I am going to end here on a very happy note. Everyone can see where this is going. 16 years of history is a lot to cover in one article. SCI has continued to support us over the years. Currently, we are constructing a new pavillion with a wheelchair sidewalk system at our place in Newaygo County. SCI as well as other corporate sponsors made this possible. It most likely will not be completed this year, but is well on the way, thanks to generous supporters like the SCI Michigan Chapter. With the funds we have received, we have helped provide a wonderful avenue of enjoyment for so many veterans who are all very deserving!

***Dear Safari Club International
Michigan Chapter,***

Thank you for your generous gift of \$5,000.00 that you made on 2/13/2024. Every act of your generosity helps us further our mission. Your gift will help us get more people back into the outdoors to experience nature, camaraderie, and emotional and spiritual well-being. Your gift is allowing us to realize a dream. It's great to get back out into the woods. All that have wanted to do is to share the hunting experience that gave me my life back so that I can help as many others who might also be experiencing a life-changing disability. It was the thing that helped me more than anything else.

Thank you again for your most generous support and your willingness to make a difference.

***Sincerely,
Carson Nyenhuis
Founder***



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Dakoyta (L) and Friend



Daniel (L) and Erik (R)

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FW 491–Hunting and Conservation

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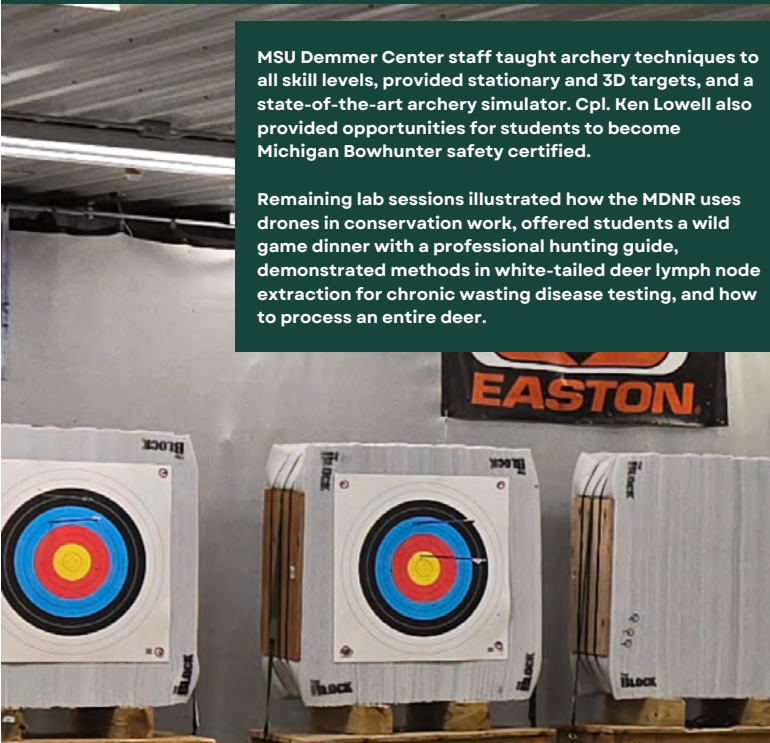
Katie Ockert, Michigan State University Extension Educator
Dr. Jerry Belant, Boone and Crockett Chair, Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, Michigan State University

COURSE LABRATORIES

Laboratory sessions provided students with practical, hands-on experiences where they honed their knowledge and skills. Laboratories included expert instruction from Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) officers Cpl. Ken Lowell and Cpl. Steve Orange who trained and certified students through the Michigan Hunter Safety Course, offered tree stand safety training, and firearm safety and maintenance.

MSU Demmer Center staff taught archery techniques to all skill levels, provided stationary and 3D targets, and a state-of-the-art archery simulator. Cpl. Ken Lowell also provided opportunities for students to become Michigan Bowhunter safety certified.

Remaining lab sessions illustrated how the MDNR uses drones in conservation work, offered students a wild game dinner with a professional hunting guide, demonstrated methods in white-tailed deer lymph node extraction for chronic wasting disease testing, and how to process an entire deer.



COURSE PURPOSE

Hunting is an important component of wildlife management, provides funding for conservation, and has deep cultural roots. Increased understanding of the values and role of hunting is key to ensuring that effective conservation can continue.

This course exposed students to the history, ethics and practice of hunting, the consumptive use of game species, and public policy issues using an interactive approach that included practical experiences in firearm and archery safety, and safe home game processing.



COURSE LECTURES

The course began with students exploring the history of hunting by reading and discussing the text *History of Hunting: A Cultural View*, by Jan E. Dizard and Mary Zeiss Stange. This text provided a rich history from the stone age to today's hunters, supporting thoughtful discussions on hunting in the past, conservation, and the ethics of contemporary hunting.

Students wrote reflective essays regarding their thoughts on what attributes and characteristics make a hunter and a hunt "ethical." Overwhelmingly, students indicated that having respect and compassion for the animal and obeying hunting laws and regulations were the two most important characteristics of an ethical hunter.

Students learned from experts at all levels of government and non-governmental organizations on the role of hunting in wildlife conservation. The consumptive use of game species was also a focus of lectures and students learned about relationships between hunting and food insecurity in Michigan.



Practicing collecting tissue samples for CWD testing.



Students learn how to safely process venison.

Students debated topics like mandatory CWD and lead testing for donated venison and how current barriers in the process could be overcome while ensuring that donated meat is safe and wholesome.



Student at the wild game dinner.

Practical skills were also honed. Students learned how to score antlers using the Boone and Crockett scoring system, estimate deer age classes on the hoof and using tooth wear and replacement, assess meat quality, and how to remove the retropharyngeal lymph nodes from deer for CWD testing.



Students learn antler scoring.



MDNR instructs on gun safety.

COURSE SURVEYS

Pre- and post-course surveys assessed students' views on hunting, impacts of wildlife overabundance on ecosystems, and proficiency with firearm and archery equipment.

PRE

View of hunting

very unfavorable
neutral
favorable
very favorable



views were **diverse**.

Wildlife overpopulation can negatively impact ecosystems

strongly disagree
neutral
agree
strongly agree



most students agreed.

POST

View of hunting

very unfavorable
neutral
favorable
very favorable



views were **all favorable**.

Wildlife overpopulation can negatively impact ecosystems

strongly disagree
neutral
agree
strongly agree



all students agreed.

Results from the surveys were overwhelmingly positive.



PRE

"I can proficiently use a firearm."

strongly disagree
disagree
agree
strongly agree



proficiency was **varied**.

POST

"My confidence in firearm proficiency has increased."

neither agree nor disagree
agree
strongly agree



every student improved.

"I can proficiently use archery equipment."

strongly disagree
disagree
agree
strongly agree



proficiency was **highly varied**.

"My confidence in archery proficiency has increased."

neither agree nor disagree
agree
strongly agree



students **improved** overall.



Thank You

We extend our sincere thanks to those who supported this inaugural course with their knowledge, time, and in-kind or financial contributions. Without you, this course would not have been an overwhelming success.



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SEIZING ALASKA'S OPPORTUNITY: THE CHANCE TO REPEAL FEDERAL OVERREACH

Presented by the Alaska Chapter of Safari Club International

May 14, 2025

A WINNING HAND: TIME TO STAND WITH ALASKA



"... fully avail itself of Alaska's vast lands and resources for the benefit of the Nation and the American citizens who call Alaska home."

- Executive Order, January 20, 2025

SCI-Alaska views this as a pivotal moment to advocate for common-sense solutions that benefit both conservation, our hunting heritage, and, most importantly, the wildlife resource!

SEND LAWYERS, GUNS, AND MONEY!



SCI Alaska Chapter engaged specialists to maximize our chances of success:

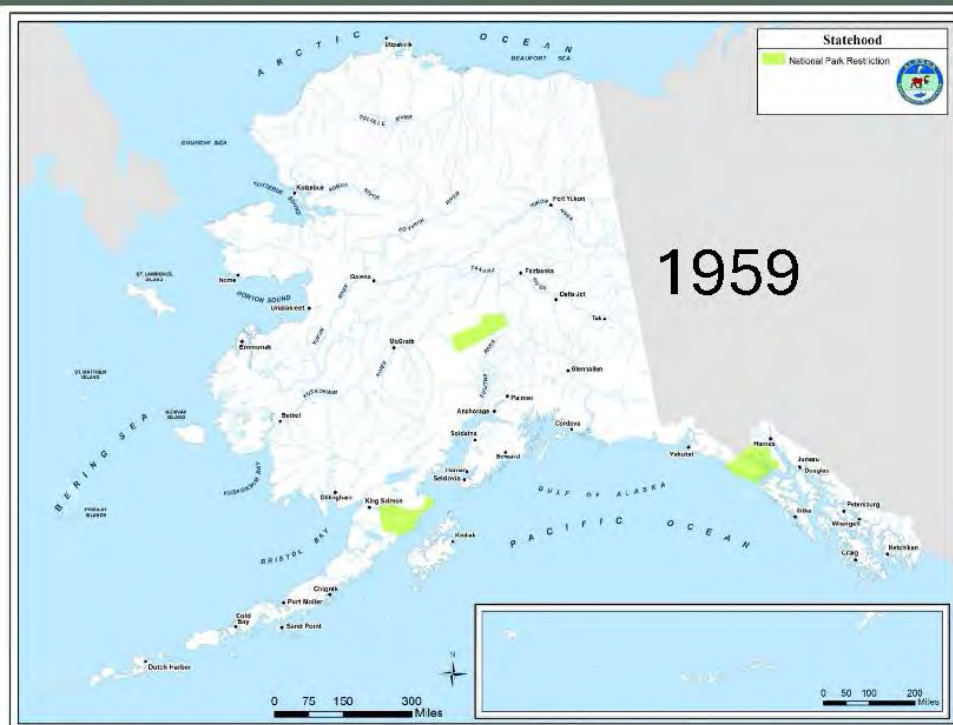
- **Contracted with Alaska law firm Ashburn & Mason (who successfully argued the *Sturgeon v. Frost* SCOTUS cases)**
- **Hired Alaska's preeminent public relations firm, Thompson & Co.**
- **Expanded lobbying presence in Washington D.C.**

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS: OUR THREE GOALS

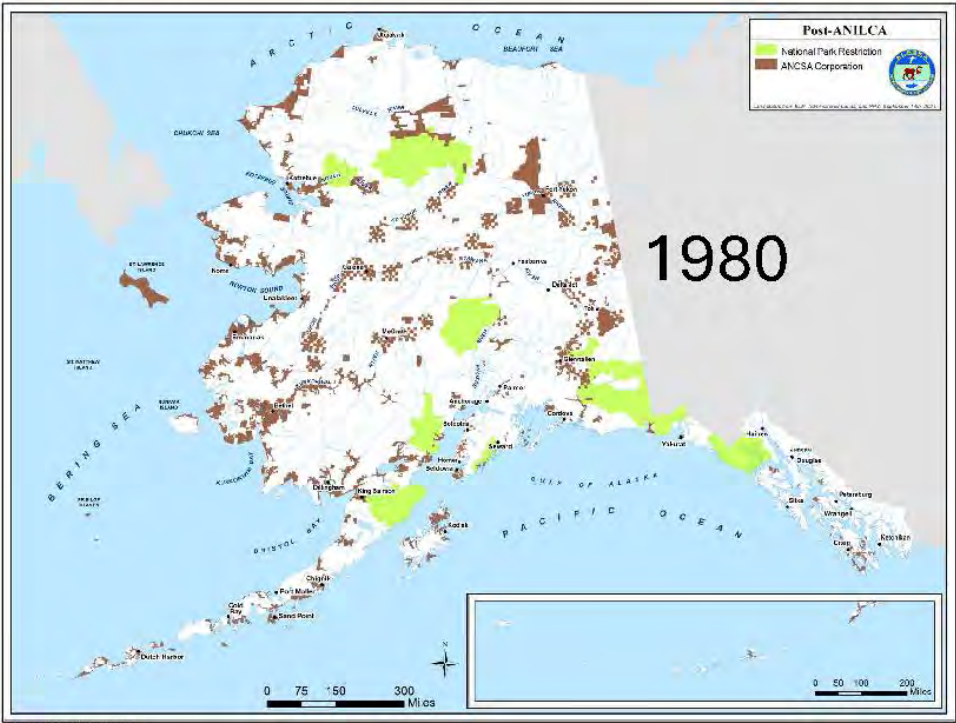
1. Restore State Management of Fish and Wildlife in Alaska
2. Confirm Alaska's Ownership of Navigable Waters
3. Restore Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) Protections for Hunting, Access, and Related Uses



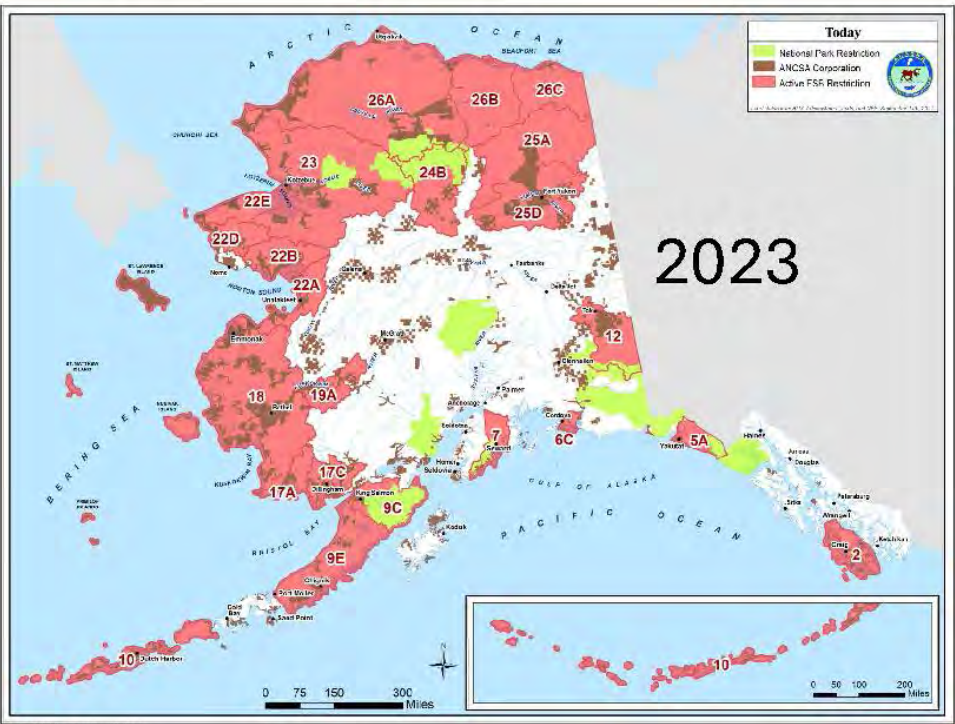
ALASKA: TIME TO ROLL BACK THE CLOCK



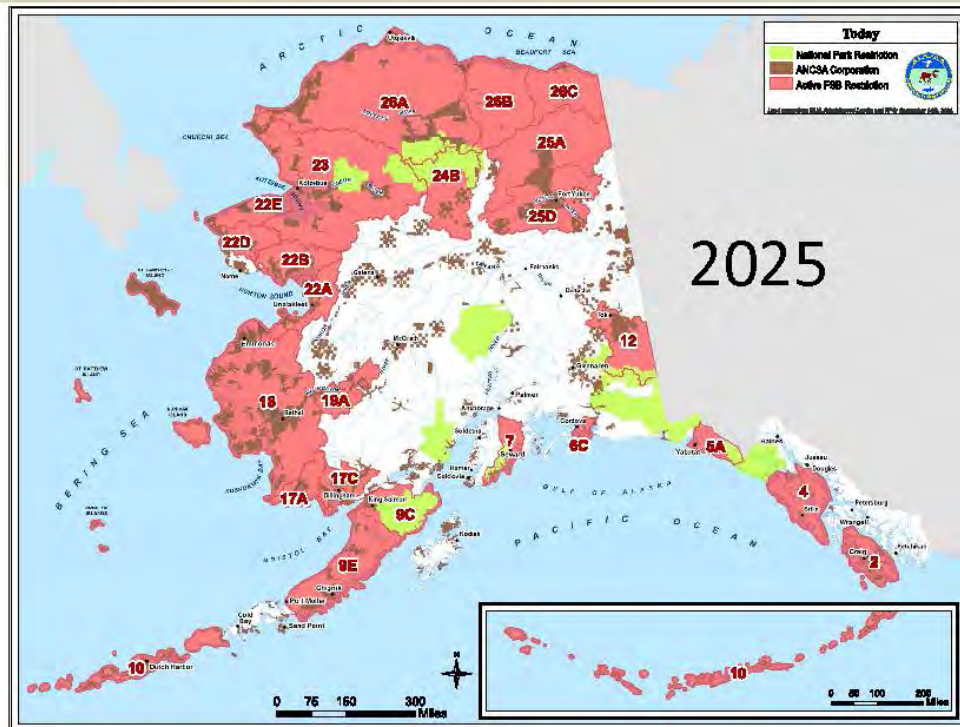
ALASKA: TIME TO ROLL BACK THE CLOCK



ALASKA: TIME TO ROLL BACK THE CLOCK



ALASKA: TIME TO ROLL BACK THE CLOCK



GOAL 1: RESTORE STATE MANAGEMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE IN ALASKA



Alaska's fish and wildlife management system is hindered by a divided federal and state system – commonly called “dual management.”

Key Recommendations:

- Defer to the state: Require federal agencies to defer to state determinations on wildlife conservation.
- Consult with the state: Federal agencies must consult in a meaningful way with Alaska's leadership when creating management plans.
- Clarify closure authority: Close federal land only when solid evidence of diminished hunting opportunities is clear, and rescind regulations outside of ANILCA's authority.

Solution: Last week, SCI submitted a *Petition for Rulemaking* to correct these problems.

GOAL 2: CONFIRM ALASKA'S OWNERSHIP OF NAVIGABLE WATERS



Since statehood in 1959, the federal government has transferred title to only 6% of navigable waters to the State of Alaska, resulting in federal agencies restricting hunter access.



GOAL 2: CONFIRM ALASKA'S OWNERSHIP OF NAVIGABLE WATERS



Key Recommendation:

- Persuade Congress: Adopt legislation that expedites confirmation of state title to its navigable waters and submerged lands, just like every other state.

Solution: SCI-Alaska Chapter drafted federal legislation that expedites transferring title for all navigable waters to the State of Alaska.

GOAL 3: RESTORE ANILCA PROTECTIONS FOR HUNTING AND ACCESS



ANILCA contains protections for hunting, motorized access, remote cabins, and other activities on federal lands.

Key Recommendations:

- Repeal federal actions: Strike actions that restrict hunting access, facilities, and related activities (e.g., the 2016 FWS Kenai Rule and 2023 NPS Commercial Services rules)
- Adopt ANILCA-based rules: Allow cabins and facilities for traditional hunting, trapping, and other activities.
- Exempt seasonal recreational services from the Department of Labor's minimum wage rule: Support small businesses providing hunting access and related services.

Solution: ANILCA must be enforced as originally intended, guaranteeing Alaskans rights to access public lands for hunting and recreation. The fix is a series of Executive and Secretarial Orders.

THE CALL TO ACTION: STAND WITH ALASKA



SCI-Alaska is actively engaging with state and federal agencies and policymakers to ensure tangible improvements for hunters in Alaska – residents and non-residents alike!

We invite other chapters to join us by:

- Staying informed about developments.
- Participating in advocacy efforts.
- Sharing your experiences and perspectives.
- Supporting SCI-Alaska's work.



JOIN US!



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Safari Club International

Michigan Chapter



SCI & Michigan Chapter Membership Form

New & Renewal

SCI Membership

- ☐ \$65 One-Year Annual Membership (New & Renewal)
- ☐ **\$150 Three-Year Membership Special (New & Renewal -\$45 savings)**

SCI Michigan Chapter

You must be an International SCI Member (see above) to join a Chapter (both memberships need to be in sync)

- ☐ \$25 One-Year Annual Membership
- ☐ **\$50 Three-Year Membership Special (\$25 savings)**

Join the SCI Michigan Chapter as a Life Member

You must first be a Lifetime Member of SCI before becoming a Lifetime Chapter Member (Regular-\$1,500.00, Seniors 60+ \$1,250.00)

- ☐ \$300 one time due; if age 59 and below
- ☐ \$200 one time due; if age 60 and above

Youth Membership Renewal (21 and under)

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11155 Bennett St. SE
Lowell, MI 49331

THANK YOU SCI MICHIGAN CHAPTER!

for sponsoring our 1st Time Hunter program



EZEKIEL GUIKEMA-11 HART, MI

On behalf of The Wildlife Center at Legends Ranch, I would like to express our heartfelt gratitude for your generous sponsorship of our 1st Time Hunter program. Your support has made it possible for us to offer life-changing opportunities to 59 new hunters this year and a total of 343 since 2020.

Your sponsorship plays a crucial role in recruiting and introducing new individuals to the wonderful world of hunting. Through this program, we aim to ignite a passion for the sport and foster a deep appreciation for wildlife conservation. By providing these aspiring hunters with the chance to experience the thrill of the hunt in a safe and controlled environment, we are confident they will carry this love for hunting and conservation throughout their lives.

Ezekiel Guikema is an eleven year old boy who attends Oceana Christian School. Ezekiel came to The Wildlife Center at Legends Ranch through our FREE School Tours program. We reached out to each of our 54 schools that visited us during 2024 and requested they each send us one student chosen to be a 1st Time Hunter at Legends Ranch. Ezekiel won a contest at his school and won the opportunity to become a 1st Time Hunter. He attended his hunt this December with his father and successfully harvested his first whitetail deer. He is so excited to use his hunting skills at home next year!



wildlifecentermi.org

WHERE YOUR MONEY GOES!



SCI Wildlife Conservation & Hunter Right Support	\$41,067
Ivan Carter Wildlife Conservation Alliance	\$20,000
Guiding Influence	\$7,500
Quest Ministries	\$7,000
Powderhorn Charters	\$6,500
Colorado Wildlife Deserve Better	\$6,368
MOOD TV	\$5,800
MSU Conservation Class - SCI MIC	\$5,000
Hunt 2 Heal	\$5,000
Outdoor Discovery Center	\$3,500
Youth Pheasant Hunt	\$3,845
Best Outdoors	\$3,000
JD Vance Video with Ruthless TV	\$2,000
First Time Hunter Pledge	\$1,500
Michigan Ad - SCI MIC	\$1,500
2024 Support Donation - SCI MIC	\$1,500
Grad Grant - SCI MIC	\$500
Kent County Orange Crushers	\$500
Sportsmen for Youth - Placemat Program	\$150
GRAND TOTAL	\$122,230

HUMANITARIAN DONATIONS 2025

We would like to thank all of you who donated to our Humanitarian Fund this year. All monies donated go directly to causes that support events for challenged youth & adults, veterans, others with special needs, and organizations that support our mission and goals. Your continued support enables us to help so many, in so many ways!

- \$3500.00 -

Skip & Sheri Weller

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SCI MICHIGAN CHAPTER 2025 CONVENTION SUPPORTERS

The SCI Michigan Chapter Board of Directors wish to thank the following people and companies who have generously donated cash or merchandise for our 2023 fundraiser.

Aaron Gellar Photography
Lee & Jan Murray
Afrihunt Safaris
Legends Taxidermy
Alan Reinemann
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Larry Smith & Diane Thompson
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SCI MICHIGAN 2025 DONATION LIST

The SCI Michigan Chapter Board of Directors wish to thank the following people who have generously donated cash to this year's Annual Donor Drive as well as to the other fund drives held during the convention.

We are very thankful for each donor. Your donations make the important work of SCI and SCI Michigan possible.

David & Mary Slikkers
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Ron & Mary Johnson
David & Alvera Kidder
John & Helen Mellema
Rodney & Jennette Winkel
Don & Linda Dixon

Bob Schautz
Dennis Sprick
Michelle Ghareeb

***If we missed recognizing or thanking anyone, we apologize.
Please let us know so it can be corrected in our next Tracker magazine.***

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