

## **Presidents Message- December 2007**

Hey all, looks like our summer is over and the fall/winter season is starting to set in. I want to welcome you to our Dec. issue and I hope every one had a great season. I fished all spring and summer with the pro team, Experience Outdoors and we had a great time both fishing and just hanging out and visiting with old friends and making new friends. We had some really good catches this year and tried out some new techniques to help put us in a position to finish well and possibly win a couple tournaments. I want to thank my teammates Greg Houtteman , Tom Greenberg , Jen Swinehart and Jim Athey for an excellent season of fishing as we had a couple of pretty good shots and we even managed to win the Ludington Off Shore Port Challenge 333 event with the 3 biggest fish of the tournament. These guys are great guys to fish with but more importantly, they are good friends to have.

Speaking of friends and fishing, my wife and I took a house boat trip this summer to Lake Cumberland Kentucky with two other couples that we have know most of our lives and what fun trip that was. One of the couples was from Georgia and had never fished before at all in their lives. We didn't have the best of weather for fishing, it was 102 degrees and sunny every day, good for relaxing and just enjoying the water but not the best for fishing. Well I sat out a couple of rods and we just let them float out behind the boat while we played in the water , and low and behold , we got Patty , one of the Georgia pair hooked up with a small bass and boy was she excited about her big fish. All she talks about now is going back next year and really trying hard for some Stripers and coming to Michigan and fishing for salmon. It sure feels good to get some one new excited about fishing, no matter their age. I'll have more about our Lake Cumberland trip in another article. I also had a chance to go to the Rooster Ranch in Ubyly Michigan and participate in a pheasant hunt recently with my son and his work buddies, again, what a good time we had. It sure is nice to get outdoors with your family and make the connection again, my son and I haven't had a chance to get out and fish together for a few years and we also haven't hunted together for pheasants ever. We had such and enjoyable day, we shot up a lot of shells, got a few birds and just spent the day together. I am really looking forward to doing the hunt again next year and getting him out fishing with us for a weekend.

I hope every ones fishing and hunting this year has been a success , just remember it isn't how many animals you get or fish you catch , its all about the experience and the enjoyment of being out doors . Next year let's make it a priority to get some one new outdoors with us, either hunting or fishing or to make the reconnection with some one that hasn't been able to get out for awhile.

The license fee increase bills in the House and Senate hasn't seen much activity as they work on the State's budget for next year , everybody's busy with that and no time for the DNR's financial woes. There was at one point some money in one of the proposed tax bills that would have funded the DNR with out having a license fee increase but our lawmakers decided to scrap that idea when it came down to the final votes , wonder how they will feel when its time for us to vote for re-election. I have seen some info. that

suggests the DNR is going to be closing 2 hatcheries, closing something like 32 State Parks, laying off several dozen people, closing hiking and cross country ski trails along with a lot of other cuts to try to balance their budget for the 2007 fiscal year. For more info. on this, go to the DNR web site and check out the data they have posted. There has been some changes to the License Fee issue recently , it seems the State found several million dollars for the Dept. to make up for the budget loss and that the Legislature may be adding a few million to the DNR from the General fund as well , hope it all works out as planned , lets keep our fingers crossed.

On a closing note, I want to pass along our condolences to the family of Ron Plecker who passed away this past Sept. after a long illness. Ron was our MSSFA State Vice-President and in charge of our “ It Pays to Belong” program . Ron was a great guy with a lot of passion for the fishery and a long time member of the Grand Rapids Chapter and he will be missed by all of us at MSSFA.

Hope every one has a nice holiday season and don't forget to start thinking about the upcoming boating and fishing shows this winter, and as always, please be careful out there.

Rick Balabon , President -MSSFA