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HUNTERS ANGLERS TRAPPERS ASSOC OF VERMONT

H.A.T. HOTWIRE

- H.A.T. 2007 Legislative Initiatives
- Hunt of a Lifetime Moose Permit Winner

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Editor: Ed Gallo

H.A.T. 2007 Legislative Initiatives by Ed Gallo

HAT is entering the 2007 Legislative Session with an extensive list of initiatives. We are privileged to have the Lake Champlain Walleye Association as a full partner in this effort. The Vermont Traditions Coalition will lend its support as well. We are expecting broad support for these initiatives as they are based in common sense and show the sportsmen are willing and, in fact, anxious to take the lead in responsible management of our natural resources. We are willing to take action and "put our money where our mouth is".

These initiatives include:

- 1) We are seeking a Joint Resolution by the Vermont House & Senate which recognizes the grave threat to the Lake Champlain fishery posed by the infestation of Sea Lamprey. We believe the threat of the Double Crested Cormorant population should be included in this resolution. This resolution should authorize and empower the Administration to seek out as expeditiously as possible any special waivers which may be

required from the federal government to make this happen now. The sea lamprey are recognized as a threat but the situation needs to be recognized as an EMERGENCY. The cormorants are deforesting entire islands in the lake as well as having a tremendous impact on the fishery itself. This threat is also an EMERGENCY.

- 2) A law enabling a \$10 user fee on every hunting license sold in Vermont. The FWD would be required to set this money aside to be used solely for deer winter habitat (deer yard) improvement on public and private lands. The FWD would be entitled to a 10% management fee of the fund ONLY – the balance MUST be used for deer yard improvements such as:
 - a) paying land-owners an exclusive management rights lease on deer

yards for a fixed time duration. Any lands placed under this management must remain open to the public for hunting.

- b) Purchase & management of deer yards – particularly where it is already adjacent or near a WMA
- c) paying foresters to do selective cutting and tree planting to improve deer yard quality
- d) GIS mapping of deer yards would be permitted use of these funds
- e) Winter deer density studies (inside the deer yard to establish carrying capacities) would be

(Continued on page 2)

H.A.T. 2007 Legislative Initiatives (continued)

(Continued from page 1)

“these threats need to be faced and dealt with now—later is not good enough”

approved use of these funds

- 3) We need a Bill establishing the requirement that ALL BOATS & WATER-CRAFT display a MANDATORY use sticker. Cost should be around \$10 each. They should be available anywhere F&H licenses are sold and one should be provided free to any purchaser of a hunting or fishing license. Proceeds should go to the FWD for use to maintain and expand fishing access areas.
- 4) We need a law that requires all state land holdings to be managed to maximize habitat value to maximum species of wildlife including game and non-game animals. Active forest management should be required on all state lands.
- 5) We are pushing for a law that requires all commercial bait dealers to sell terrestrials in biodegradable containers.
- 6) HAT is seeking a Capital Appropriation to improve the state's

fishing access areas with docks, improved ramps, dredging and handicapped fish platforms. Suggestion is to generate 2 or 3 standard access ramp/dock designs and apply them throughout the state to improve efficiency and maximize results.

HAT believes each of these initiatives are important and necessary. The lamprey problem is being addressed but progress is slow and they are breeding faster than management efforts can kill them. More and more tributaries are becoming breeding grounds and the state needs to recognize the impact to the fishery as well as commerce in the entire state. The cormorants are a similar issue but their damage is much more visible as they have deforested entire islands in the lake. These threats need to be faced and dealt with now – later is not good enough.

The deer management changes we have seen under Commissioner Laroche are having a significant affect. Most sportsmen are quite happy with the progress in such a short time. The one area that needs tremendous effort is deer winter habitat improvement. The deer yards literally control the total

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(Continued on page 3)

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H.A.T. 2007 Legislative Initiatives (continued)

by Ed Gallo

“ we will need broad, vocal support of the sportsmen to accomplish this task”

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number of deer that can live in Vermont and it has been over twenty years since there has been any significant effort to document and improve them. Comm. Laroche recognizes this and has begun to address the situation but he needs funding and he needs manpower. This initiative gives him both in that he will have dedicated money to work with and the ability to sub-contract help to get the projects done. Most “special interest groups” are constantly asking the government for “stuff” to be paid for by someone else – the sportsmen are asking for something and are willing to pay for it as well – but the money has to be dedicated for this use only.

The need for a mandatory boat sticker was generated by the Legislature itself. They opened the use of Vermont’s access areas to virtually every boater when they knew it was the sportsmen paying for them and only the sportsmen. We are not asking to kick out the other users – only to have them help pay for the resource. The sportsmen will get one free sticker since they are already paying for the access areas through their license fees.

The state landholdings have been poorly mismanaged over the past ten to twenty years. HAT was instrumental in getting a “Habitat Management Biologist” position opened in FWD to actively manage WMA properties as they should be and that program is a tremendous success. It generates far more money for the department than the cost of the biologist as well as improving habitat on a large scale. It is time for all state lands to be actively managed and improved for wildlife – this is especially true in light of the Congressional Delegations disregard for the wishes of Vermonters and an established public process.

Biodegradable bait containers for worms and other terrestrials is a sad necessity. We all see the styrofoam containers they have now strewn about the shores of our lakes and rivers and we have only some slob fishermen to thank for this. There are no other groups purchasing bait and littering the containers so we own this one and need to address it.

The state’s fishing access areas are a sad situation. Fishing brings a tremendous flow of money into the state and the Legislature needs to recognize that, without decent access ar-

reas, the money will dwindle. We are seeking some capital funding be focused on this important piece of the state’s infrastructure. Perhaps the Legislature could provide matching money for access areas that is provided for bike trails.

We will need broad, vocal support of the sportsmen of Vermont to accomplish this task. These are common sense solutions to important issues. Please plan to stop by the HAT Booth at the Yankee Show this month and share your thoughts on these important issues.

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*The Professional Voice of
Vermont's Hunters, Anglers
& Trappers*

Hunt of a Lifetime Moose Permit Winner by Keith Darby

The second recipient of the free moose permit made available to young hunters facing a life-threatening illness went to a young man from North Carolina named Kurtis Towery. This year's hunt was particularly challenging as Kurtis is in a wheelchair and had very limited mobility. HAT had a specially equipped van made available from a local Vietnam Vet and that made all the difference in the world. Kurtis and the support team stayed at Ernie Gaskin's camp in Granby and Essex Timber Company permitted us to hunt a section of their land where only limited access was available.

HAT wishes to thank these fine people and all the folks who supported this year's effort. We had many people provide services and support for the effort and we deeply appreciate them. Every person we ran into in the field or in public had kind words of support and encouragement for Kurtis and I know he was impressed with Vermont hospitality. We had a number of other moose hunting parties cross paths with us and every one of them tried to push moose towards Kurtis. These are true sportsmen.

The volunteers from HAT that make this possible get a big "thank you" as well. These guys donate a week's vacation and their own hunt-

ing time to make a wish come true for a youngster they have never met. Every one of them is already talking about next year and we know we won't have any trouble finding support staff.

Kurtis was not able to fill his tag but he came very close a couple of times – just needed a few more seconds worth of cooperation by the moose but such is the way of hunting. We all had a great time and we stay in touch with Kurtis through email. He is a terrific young man and we wish him the best.

This moose permit is available every year and we are already working to determine who the 2007 recipient might

be. We would like to have a youngster from Vermont but these kids usually want to go out of state on their big adventure. One young man from Vermont has killed a tremendous elk in New Mexico.

We want to thank the Legislature and Commissioner Laroche for all the support we get in this endeavor. The people of Vermont are happy to help these youngsters and this is a way for them to forget all about their predicament and just be a kid for a week.