



# Viewpoints



## Biden's union manifesto

Editor's note: A vote to unionize an Amazon warehouse in Bessemer, Ala., is taking place this month. If it succeeds it would be the most significant union organizing win in the South in decades, and perhaps ignite organizing drives at other properties held by Amazon — a notoriously anti-union company that employs some 1.2 million workers and is fighting union efforts in Bessemer.

Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos personally earned \$70 billion last year during the pandemic, growing his wealth to about \$186 billion, the *Washington Post* reported in early January, illustrating the divide between the haves and have-nots. There was no profit-sharing plan with Amazon workers.

On Feb. 28, President Joe Biden, who pledged to be the most "pro-union president you've ever seen," issued a remarkable two minute, 20-second video, with a nod of support to Amazon workers unionizing and an overall manifesto advocating for unions across the nation.

Labor historian Erik Loomis, in a post on Twitter, called Biden's remarks "arguably the most pro-union public statement by a president in support of unions in the entirety of American history."

Following are President Biden's comments

*"I have long said that America wasn't built by Wall Street. America was built by the middle class, and unions built the middle class. Unions put power in the hands of workers. They level the playing field. They give you a stronger voice for your health, your safety, higher wages, protections from racial discrimination and sexual harassment.*

*"Unions lift up workers, both union and nonunion. But especially black and brown workers. I made it clear when I was running that my administration's policy would be to support unions organizing and the right to collectively bargain. I'm keeping that promise.*

*"You should all remember, the National Labor Relations Act didn't just say that unions are allowed to exist, it said that we should encourage unions.*

*"So let me be really clear. It's not up to me whether anyone should join a union. But let me be even more clear. It's not up to an employer to decide that either. The choice to join a union is up to the workers. Full stop. Today and over the next few days and weeks workers in Alabama and all across America are voting on whether to organize a union in their workplace. This is vitally important — a vitally important choice. As America grapples with the deadly pandemic, the economic crisis and the reckoning on race — what it reveals is the deep disparities that still exist in our country.*

*And there should be no intimidation, no coercion, no threats, no anti-union propaganda. No supervisor should confront employees about their union preferences.*

*You know, every worker should have a free and fair choice to join a union. The law guarantees that choice. And it's your right, not that of an employer; it's your right, no employer can take that right away. So make your voice heard.*

*God bless you all and may God protect the workers and their families who are trying to figure out how to make it fairly. Thank you."*

*The Building Tradesman welcomes your letters to the editor. We reserve the right to edit for clarity and to shorten them. Please sign the letter and include a way to contact you.*

How to contact us —

By mail: Building Tradesman Editor  
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ON HAND to deliver the \$8,375 donation to Care House in Mount Clemens are (l-r) Alex Brzuszek (Sheetmetal 80); Rob Williams (Sprinkler Fitters 704); Jason Grunenwald (Sheetmetal 80); Tom McWilliams (Plumbers 98); Care House Executive Director Dorie Vazquez-Nolan; Kevin Zimmerman (Operating Engineers 324); John Sape (Painters 2352); Jim Horvath (Iron Workers 25); Jeremy Haviland (Painters 2352); Robert Gonzalez (Painters District Council 1M); Joe Hallman (The Local Credit Union); Jim Ritchie (BAC Local 2); and Don Stepp (Glaziers and Glassworkers 357).



## A care package for Care House

MOUNT CLEMENS—Building trades union representatives on Feb. 26 donated \$8,375 to the operations of Care House, a facility that helps women and children who are victims of domestic violence. The money was donated in the form of \$25 Meijer gift cards, which are distributed throughout the year for clients at the facility to use for food, gasoline and personal items.

This is the 21st year the union reps have made a similar donation, and the gift cards are in a particularly useful form for the Care House staff to distribute.

"This is really amazing to get this gift year after year, we are very appreciate of you guys thinking of us," said Care House Executive Director Dorie Vazquez-Nolan. "Last year we had some left over gift cards and we gave \$125 to some families for them to use as Christmas gifts for their kids. More than one mom started crying, they said they

never expected the help and they could really use it."

She said the gift cards are also useful as gas cards for client transportation and purchasing food for Care House support groups.

Located in an old home on Market Street, Care House's mis-

sion is "to prevent and reduce the incidence and trauma of child sexual and physical abuse in Macomb County through collaborative, multidisciplinary and effective family-centered activities." Since it opened in 1996, Care House has coordinated more

than 8,500 forensic interviews of children who were suspected victims of sexual abuse, physical abuse or were a witness to a violent act. Care House has also provided support services to more than 11,500 families, all at no cost to the families they serve

## Average worker pay rose in 2020

(Continued from Page 1)  
accurate indicator of the amount of economic devastation and pain experienced by millions of workers and their families in 2020, nor is it an indicator that workers found themselves in a better bargaining position. It is indicative, however, of increasing inequality where those at the top have largely been spared from the recession while those at the bottom have been absolutely devastated."

According to Pew Research, year-over-year income growth in the U.S. was mostly in the 2-3

percent range since 2013. But in the years just before the 2007-08 financial collapse, average hourly earnings often increased by around 4 percent. And during the high-inflation years of the 1970s and early 1980s, average wages commonly jumped 7-9 percent per year.

"Most workers are still suffering from a relatively weak bargaining position that prevents them from securing pay raises sufficient to make up for decades of slow wage growth," said the EPI's Jori Kandra. "There are numerous ways policymakers can

restore bargaining power to workers during the recovery from the pandemic, including raising the minimum wage to \$15 by 2025 and passing the Protecting the Right to Organizing Act." The PRO Act, currently legislation in Congress, would change federal law to allow easier union organizing rules, among other pro-worker changes.

*"Man's mind, once stretched by a new idea, never regains its original dimensions."*  
—Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809-1894)



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# BUILDING MICHIGAN!

## Michigan Bell's Saginaw legacy

### HISTORY IN THE MAKING

By Marty Mulcahy



THE FORMER MICHIGAN BELL Building at Washington Avenue at James Street in Saginaw, now owned by AT&T, continues to be one of the city's most prominent structures. Outside of Detroit, it was the largest of more than 40 Michigan Bell buildings erected in our state. The eight-story, limestone-clad building was given two architecturally unfortunate additions in the 1970s, a ugly tower on top, and a plain addition on the building's south side.

Photo credit: Marty Mulcahy

One of the great, unheralded contributors to Michigan's cityscapes is the local collection of telephone buildings.

Michigan Bell, part of the behemoth Bell Telephone System which connected North America with copper-wired voice and data communication, sponsored the construction of a huge collection of buildings, big and small, often on main streets in Michigan communities, and often architecturally significant.

Michigan Bell Telephone Co. was founded in 1904, one of 22 original local carriers of the nationwide Bell System, named for the telephone's inventor, Alexander Graham Bell. Not unlike the electrification process that was going on at the time, installing a phone system was much more than just mounting a phone on a home's hallway wall and attaching a wire. The wire, of course, had to go somewhere, and the company's billing, customer service and administration had to be housed somewhere, too.

Michigan Bell's flagship building in the state was its headquarters tower at Michigan and Cass avenues in Detroit, which grew to 19 stories with an expansion in 1927. But Bell was also erecting numerous other buildings around the state, many of which continue to be used today with functions that relate to telecommunications, cable television and internet service. And thanks to Michigan Bell's original generous design and construction budgets, the buildings have almost universally been tremendous assets to their downtowns over the past century.

The phone company went all-in with its building in Saginaw, an eight-story, 122-foot-tall gem at 309 Washington Street. Designed by noted architect Wirt Rowland of Smith, Hinchman and Grylls, the building would house new dial telephone equipment for Michigan Bell's mid-Michigan operations.

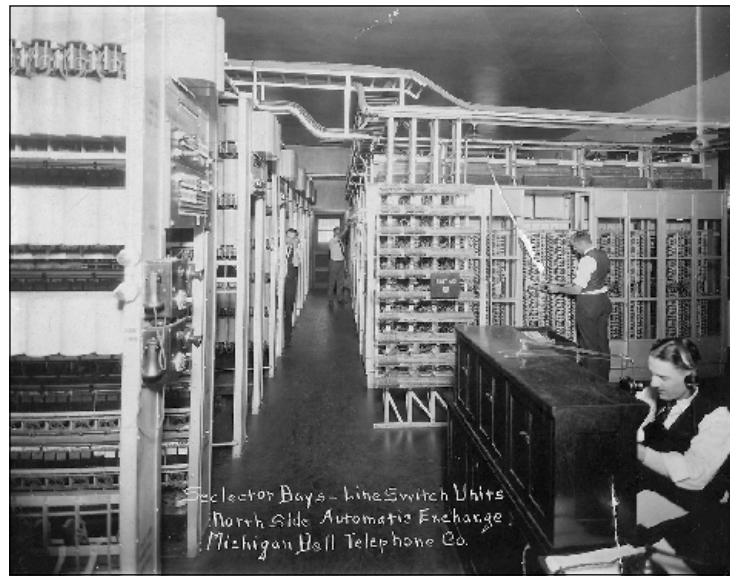
"With the exception of the main headquarters building in Detroit, this combination central office and business office in Saginaw was the largest building constructed by Michigan Bell during the 1920s," said Detroit-area architectural historian Michael Smith.

The Saginaw building was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1982. Construction started in 1929, and was completed in 1930. The cost: \$2.5 million. An unfortunate top of the tower structure was added in 1974.

"The Michigan Bell Telephone Company's Saginaw office building served as headquarters for the northern part of the Lower Peninsula and housed new automatic dial telephone equipment for this central Michigan district," wrote Kathryn Eckert for *Archipedia*, a publication of the Society of Architectural Historians. "Michigan Bell prided itself on its construction of fine buildings to enhance the communities that it served. Between 1925 and 1930 it erected 45 practical and attractive buildings.

The Saginaw office was among the largest and most imposing – second only to the headquarters in Detroit. Termed by the company 'a modern American style of architecture,' the squat, eight-story building is one of the few Art Deco buildings in Saginaw."

The application for national historic designation said the



THIS 1933 photo of the Michigan Bell Building in Grand Rapids – which, like the Saginaw Bell building, was designed by architect Wirt Rowland – illustrates the presence of some of the heavy switching equipment that had to be taken into account with the beefed-up structure of the buildings.

Photo credit: History Grand Rapids

Saginaw building was "typical of Michigan Bell construction in the 1930s." It said the building's first two levels were disguised between tall, two-story windows, wide stone bandcourses separated the third through sixth floors, with the top two floors set back and crested with low-relief chevrons.

"The telephone equipment for all of Michigan Bell's service area in the Thumb and Saginaw Valley was placed in the building, necessitating unusually heavy construction," the national historic application said. "Office buildings of the 1930s were usually designed to carry 75 pounds of weight per square foot. Michigan Bell's buildings, however, was designed to accommodate 175 pounds per square foot. The ceilings were constructed especially high to accommodate tall equipment and extra space was designed into the building to allow for future telephone company expansion. Michigan Bell's foresight in providing a building of extra heavy construction allows it to remain in use today."

Eckert's *Archipedia* entry says the Saginaw building "was constructed to be fireproof; gray limestone clads its steel reinforced-concrete and brick skeleton. Its sturdy construction of 74 cement footings buried 18 to 22 feet underground and 74 reinforced-steel columns supported the installation of heavy machinery and could accommodate the addition of three more stories."

Architectural historian Smith called the interior "exceptionally lively and vibrant. Stenciling in angular shapes of turquoise, coral, silver and rust decorated the upper sections of walls and columns. Below that was wood paneling in light and medium tones, and a terrazzo floor with diamond patterns of complimentary cream and pale green colors. All in all, an outrageously bright and attractive scheme."

Communities across Michigan were fortunate to have Rowland – a major league architect – design their phone build-

ings. A Clinton, Michigan native, Rowland worked with industry giants Albert Kahn and George Mason and managed the design of three of Detroit's most praised and prominent downtown towers, the Penobscot, Guardian and Buhl buildings.

"One of Detroit's most prolific architects, Wirt C. Rowland's hands touched the blueprints for many of the city's most show-stopping early 20th century buildings. During his 50-year career, he worked with four of the city's most prominent architectural firms, drafting or designing an impressive range of building types and architectural styles," writes Denis McGreen for *Historic Detroit*. "As an avid modernist and supporter of the Arts and Crafts movement, he is best known for contributing Art Deco-style skyscrapers to Detroit's skyline."

Michael Smith wrote an entire book about the architect, *Designing Detroit: Wirt Rowland and the Rise of Modern American Architecture*. "Having Michigan Bell as a client entailed certain advantages of particular interest to Rowland," Smith wrote. "Their structures were, for the most part, industrial buildings, reducing some of the often confounding challenges entailed by office buildings, banks and schools."

"The importance of Bell as a client, particularly in light of the genuine design challenges posed by their buildings, dictated that Rowland handle their design work. The considerable number of Michigan Bell buildings produced by Rowland during these years – nearly all of which still stand – provides an extraordinary record of his rapidly evolving vision of modern design as well as his facility in adapting a wide range of historical styles to modern use."

Michigan Bell and the rest of the Bell System was broken up into smaller companies in a 1984 anti-trust case. Michigan Bell was eventually absorbed into Ameritech and then into AT&T. The building continues to be used today by AT&T.



THE NEW Saginaw Michigan Bell Building was deemed important enough to put on a postcard in the 1930s.

Image credit: Detroit Public Library

## Jobless benefits boost on agenda

(Continued from Page 1)  
benefit receive from 4.1 percent to 6.1 percent of their highest quarter earnings.

Through an executive order last year in the early days of the pandemic, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer extended jobless benefits to their old level of 26 weeks. Together with federal pandemic relief, claimants were eligible for up to 59 weeks of benefits.

Whitmer's executive orders were invalidated by the state Supreme Court last fall, but the state Legislature continued the benefits extension until Dec. 31, 2020.

Things got confusing in January. Whitmer issued a line-item veto to halt money from going to legislation that would have more fully funded the state's Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund. The governor called it a corporate tax break – even as her action reduced benefit weeks from 26 to 20, the level where it stands today.

State Rep. Jason Wentworth (R-Clare) said in early January that whether the governor "admits it or not, the facts are clear – anyone filing for unemployment between now and April will have fewer benefits because of her veto. People need the truth."

Whitmer – who championed

the return of a 26-week benefit period long before COVID-19 hit – noted that Republicans chose to tie together a so-called corporate tax cut with the extension of benefits, and said they should

immediately pass a law extending benefits. Since early January, they have yet to do so. The Dems' legislation is an attempt to kick-start the resumption of those extra benefits.

## Dems push bailout of multi-employer pensions

(Continued from Page 1)

"This economic crisis has hit already struggling pension plans like a wrecking ball, and the retirement security of millions of American workers depends on getting this package across the finish line."

Congressional Republicans had been loathe to give a "bailout" to union pension plans – even though those who are hurt the most, individual retirees – were not at fault for the crisis. According to the House Education and Labor Committee, the pandemic could have caused an additional 180 multiemployer plans to become insolvent, bringing the total of plans facing failure to 300, covering 2.5 million participants. Economists have said failure of those pension plans would have created an economic depression.

"It is a bailout, and it is a godsend for underfunded multi-employer plans," said Michigan funds attorney John Tesija, whose firm Novara Tesija & Catenacci P.L.L.C. administers about a dozen union pension plans. "This is going to be enough money to inject certainty into the viability of failing plans, going forward."

Tesija pointed out that many multi-employer plans are holding their own in the "green zone" (greater than 80 percent funded) or "yellow zone," (65-80 percent funded). But one plan, the Teamsters Central States, is mired in the red zone (less than 65 percent funded) and only has about 44 months of benefits remaining for its retirees.

The provisions in the plan to prop up failing multi-employer plans create financial scenarios and funding nuts and bolts that only an actuary would love. The law injects money into the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corp. (PBGC), that is supposed to act as a backstop for failing pension plans, but itself has been slated to run out of money by 2026.

According to *Pensions and Investments*, the new law will "expand the PBGC's authority and resources to help troubled plans through partitions. It would also double the PBGC guarantee level for plan participants from the current maximum of \$12,870 for 30 years of service."

The *National Law Review* said the PBGC would now "send payments directly to eligible multiemployer pension plans," and would create additional funding for itself by raising premiums. Current premiums are \$31 per participants, that will go up to \$52 per participant by 2031.

The Congressional Research Service said the new funding allocated by Congress will aim to prop up the 10-15 percent of multi-employer plans that are "in critical and declining status," and "establish a fund within the PBGC and appropriate amounts as necessary to provide special financial assistance to certain multiemployer plans. The special financial assistance would not have to be repaid."

According to the labor law firm Jackson Lewis, the new law "emphasizes the 'partition' of troubled multiemployer pension plans. Partition is a procedure where a multiemployer pension plan is divided into two plans, with the PBGC accepting financial responsibility for the more troubled portion of the plan representing the benefits of participants for whom no contributions are being made."

Importantly for individual retirees, Jackson Lewis said, "In addition to expanding the current partition program, EPPRA would repeal the benefit suspensions that were introduced in 2014 by the Multiemployer Pension Reform Act (MPRA). Under these provisions, many troubled multiemployer plans had applied for approval to suspend and possibly reduce the accrued benefits of certain participants. If enacted, EPPRA would prohibit any future suspension of benefits applications (or approvals) under MPRA. It does not appear, however, that EPPRA would affect MPRA benefit suspensions that were approved prior to the date of enactment."

## Study: union safety advantage is real

(Continued from Page 1)

top of the list," says LHSFNA Management Co-Chairmen Noel C. Borck. "Studies like this confirm that investing in safety, empowering workers to speak up about hazards and maintaining a strong relationship between labor and management makes a real difference."

With six more years of data since the original study, the IWH did a follow-up to see if their conclusions still held up. The follow-up study used data from approximately 60,000 companies in Ontario between 2012-2018. The results showed an even stronger union safety effect than the original study:

- Union firms had 25 percent fewer lost workday incidents
- Union firms had 23 percent fewer lost workday claims from musculoskeletal (i.e., sprain and strain) injuries
- Union firms had 16 percent fewer claims for critical or severe injuries
- "The data doesn't lie, and reaffirms what we have always suspected," says Robert Bronk, CEO of the Ontario Construction Secretariat. "Putting an emphasis on worker training, safe work practices and giving workers a voice in the workplace makes a positive difference for workers and for contractors."

The "union safety effect" found in the study was strongest for companies with more than 50 employees, where there was a 44 percent reduction in claims. The effect was consistent across multiple construction sectors, including industrial maintenance workers, sheet metal workers and roofers.

The authors of the study attribute this "union safety effect" to several factors, including:

- Better training of the union workforce
- Union workers are more comfortable raising safety issues
- A higher journeyman to apprentice ratio
- Less worker turnover

## Just joking

A guy goes to the doctor and says "Doc, you gotta check my leg. Something's wrong. Just put your ear up to my thigh, you'll hear it!"

The doctor cautiously places his ear to the man's thigh only to hear, "Gimme 20 bucks, c'mon, I really need 20 bucks!"

Taken aback, the doctor said, "I've never seen or heard anything like this before! How long has this been going on?"

"It's been a while, but that's nothing. Now put your ear to my knee!" the man said.

The doctor put his ear to the man's knee and heard it say, "Man, I really need 10 dollars, just lend me 10, that's all I ask!"

Dumfounded, the doctor said, "Sir, I really don't know what to tell you. I've never seen anything like this!"

"OK, hold on now Doc, we're not done. Now, just put your ear up to my ankle!" the man urged him.

The doctor did as the man said and was blown away to hear his ankle plead, "Please, I just need 5 bucks. Lend me 5 bucks please, if you can, or whatever you got!"

Still amazed, the doctor told the patient to wait a few minutes while he did some research. Finding nothing, he went back into the exam room.

"There's nothing about this in my reference books, or any of the online medical journals," the doctor told his patient. But I can make an educated guess though. I believe that based on what I've heard here today, I can tell you that your leg appears to be broke in three places."

























A PRESSURES AND PIPES worker guides the placement of HVAC equipment through the roof of the Frauenthal Center in Muskegon. Photo courtesy Pressures and Pipes

## Historic theater improved behind the scenes

(Continued from Page 1)

A temporary hole was carved in the building's roof to create access, and a crane with a hydraulic dumpster at the end of its line, eased the removal process. Then the new system was lifted in.

"I've never seen an air handler like that," said Plummer of the original works. "It had a huge motor, which went bad at some point and was replaced. But the coils and the duct system were just really complex, there was a custom-made diffuser that split up the movement of the air inside the theatre."

The preferred method for taking apart much of the old system would have been cutting up the works with a torch. But Plummer said the penthouse area was enclosed by dry timber beams, and he quipped that they "didn't want to be on the news" for sparking a fire. So the mechanical works were taken out laboriously with saws-all and by removing bolts. "It was slower but we got it done safely," he said.

The modern equipment that was placed by Pressures and Pipes atop the roof and in the penthouse in the \$400,000 project included a new seven-piece Trane air handling unit, a boiler, and boiler pieces. A condensing unit and rooftop unit were set into place, with some of the pieces weighing as much as 6,000 lbs. Helping to feed the system is a new 3-inch natural gas main that had to be routed from the building's basement to the penthouse.

Newkirk's electricians also fed the HVAC wiring to two new panels with 400-amp feeds at 480 volts. Project Manager Mike Donahue said the three-person crew of electricians had little problem snaking the wire up through the historic theatre. "We were able to repurpose the existing routes to feed everything up there," he said. "We pulled out some old wire, but none of it was 90 years old. He estimated that the original wire had been replaced in the 1970s.

Donahue said Newkirk

worked closely with Pressures and Pipes craftspeople on this project and in the past with Andy J. Egan. "Everything has gone very well here," Donahue said. "It's such a pleasure to work and coordinate with them and other union shops, because I know they're people who have their stuff together."

Located prominently at Third and Western Avenue, construction of the opulent 1,726-seat theater came under the design of prominent architect C. Howard Crane. Opened at the dawn of talking movies, the theater has hosted all kinds of entertainment over the years, from symphonies, to vaudeville to stage productions.

The building features extensive plasterwork, which will benefit by the improved control of humidity that this HVAC project will bring. Also set to benefit are the facility's wool carpeting, chair upholstery and the masonite stage, which has been known to buckle from changes in humidity.

## Local 169 Boilermakers



Boilermakers Local 169

ALLEN PARK – The next Union Meeting, scheduled for Friday, March 12, 2021, will be held in Area One at the union hall – 1755 Fairlane Drive, Allen Park, MI 48101.



BOB HUTSELL

Masks are required for entry. Immediately following, there will be a special meeting to nominate the delegates for the 34<sup>th</sup> Consolidated Convention.

This convention will be held virtually on July 19, 2021. The Union Hall has resumed "normal" operations with the previous safety measures in place, which include social distancing, mandatory mask use, and limited occupancy. As always, if you do not feel well, do not come to the hall.

Union dues for 2021 are \$49.85 per month. The union hall accepts Visa, MasterCard, and Discover. Payments can be made both at the hall and over the phone.

OSHA 10 and OSHA 30 safety training can now be taken online. Please visit our website – www.boilermakerslocal169.com – for more information.

**Training Center:** The Area One Training Center is in the process of reopening. You will be notified by your Area Agent when you have an assigned training day and time.

**Apprentices:** Congratulations to the Spring 2021 apprentice graduates!

Sweatshirts are available for purchase for \$40.00. Payments can be made with cash or check. If you live out of the area and would like to order one, please call the hall. Additional shipping charges will be added. Baseball caps are also available.

Retired member, Harold (Continued above)

(Continued from below) thoughts and prayers go out to "Biff" Hoagland, passed away on February 19, 2021. Our family and friends during this difficult time.

AFL-CIO affiliated Local Union families and friends are welcome to join us for the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual

IBEW Local 58 Benevolent Fund Detroit River Walleye Tournament

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ENTRIES MUST BE RECEIVED BY WED, APRIL 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021  
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## Outdoors

# Fish need oxygen, too



A MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT of Natural Resources fisheries technician is shown lowering a probe to measure dissolved oxygen. MDNR photo

a long cable.

As the probe is lowered slowly from the surface to the bottom of the lake, the meter records water depth and dissolved oxygen concentrations along the way. Once a profile of the water column has been completed, it is time to pack up the equipment and move on to the next lake.

**Management decisions.** When the surveys have been completed and the data has been downloaded to a database, fisheries biologists can analyze the information to determine the current habitat conditions and the future direction of trout management for each lake.

Often, late winter habitat conditions are found to be suitable for trout, and the recommendation is made to continue fish stocking to support the recreational fishery for anglers.

If lakes are found with low dissolved oxygen concentrations, then these waters are monitored in subsequent years to determine whether this is a temporary or persistent late-winter condition that may warrant a change in management.

"Most of the stocked trout lakes often have really good dissolved oxygen concentrations all winter long and thus support multiple year-classes of trout," said John Bauman, a DNR fisheries biologist at Escanaba in Delta County. "However, long and cold winters with high levels of snow (like the winter of 2013-2014) can present challenging habitat conditions, until the spring melt."

Dissolved oxygen is a critical habitat component of successful trout management and the creation of recreational fisheries.

Annually monitoring a subset of U.P. trout lakes is crucial to update information needed by fisheries biologists to wisely use stocked fish to create popular recreational fisheries for anglers.

Therefore, it is not surprising that future monitoring of late-winter dissolved oxygen levels in U.P. inland trout lakes will continue to be a regular survey activity for DNR fisheries staff in the region.



### This woman in construction...

MARKING WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION WEEK, March 7-13, we offer a tip of the hard hat to Gabby Pasillas, a third-year Sheet Metal Workers Local 7 apprentice employed by Cooke Sheet Metal. WIC Week is in place to "highlight women as a viable component of the construction industry. WIC Week also provides an occasion for the National Association of Women in Construction's thousands of members across the country to raise awareness of the opportunities available for women in the construction industry and to emphasize the growing role of women in the industry." Gabby has been working in northern Michigan for the past two years and her co-workers report they're happy to have her on the crew. Gabby said after her apprenticeship is finished, she will be grateful to have zero student debt, a living wage, quality health care and a pension. Gabby is getting married this September to her fiancée Justin. They enjoy outdoor activities, mostly hiking, and have a very spoiled rescued dog named Mia.

By Mark Mylchreest and Darren Kramer  
Michigan Department of Natural Resources

Deep winter snow and prolonged ice cover on Upper Peninsula inland lakes can create conditions that present unique habitat challenges to fish.

Staffers from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Fisheries Division, specifically the Northern Lake Michigan Management Unit and Lake Superior Management Unit, annually survey a subset of U.P. trout lakes in late winter.

They do this to determine if habitat variables, such as dissolved oxygen levels, are suitable for survival of fish stocked by the DNR.

**Fish need oxygen.** Trace amounts of dissolved oxygen are required by fish and other aquatic life in Michigan's inland lakes throughout the year. Fish need dissolved oxygen to breathe through their gills. Dissolved oxygen during the winter – after ice covers the lake – got into the lake during the seasons of open water.

The dissolved oxygen content of water depends primarily on three variables. These are the amount of mixing with the air above the lake, the rate of oxygen production by plants and the rate of oxygen consumption by living aquatic organisms.

During periods of prolonged ice cover, lakes are sealed off and cannot be recharged with oxygen from the air. Additionally, ice and snow reduce the amount of sunlight reaching aquatic plants, thereby reducing photosynthesis and oxygen production. During photosynthesis, living plants use sunlight energy and carbon dioxide to make plant tissue and dissolved oxygen.

Meanwhile, ongoing consumption of dissolved oxygen by aquatic animals and natural processes, like decomposition of plants, depletes the dissolved oxygen supply stored in the lake when the lake froze over.

"The top challenge fish and aquatic communities face in winter is the threat of running out of oxygen before the ice cover melts in spring," said Jennifer Johnson, a DNR fisheries biologist at Norway in Dickinson County.

Different fish species vary in their tolerance of low dissolved oxygen conditions. Brook, brown and rainbow trout are most sensitive, and walleye, bass and bluegill have intermediate sensitivity. Northern pike and yellow perch are relatively tolerant, while other fish, like bullheads and some minnow species, are very tolerant.

Late winter is usually a critical period for fish in U.P. inland lakes, as this is when dissolved oxygen concentrations typically

reach their lowest levels. So, this is the best time of winter to investigate if these low dissolved oxygen conditions are present and possibly limiting the survival of fish.

"Over the past several years, we have been checking dissolved oxygen levels in stocked trout lakes in the eastern, central and western U.P. to update habitat information needed to guide future management," said fisheries technician Brad Shucha, from the DNR's Crystal Falls office in Iron County.

**The process.** Surveying dissolved oxygen under ice cover during the late winter is a relatively straightforward process for DNR Northern Lake Michigan and Lake Superior Management Unit fisheries technicians from the Newberry and Crystal Falls field offices. However, managed trout lakes are often located far off main roads and require a snowmobile for access.

Once at a lake, a GPS unit or a smart-phone and lake-mapping application are used to determine the deepest location in the lake. When that location is found, a hole is drilled with an ice auger and the snow and slush is cleared away from the hole.

Next, a probe with sensors is lowered into the open water in the hole. The probe is cylindrical, roughly 2 inches in diameter and about 18 inches long. The probe is linked to a hand-held meter via

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