

Michigan Forest Association – *Leaves* Newsletter

Phone & Fax 517-663-3423
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Change in MFA Executive Director – About four or five years ago Executive Director Mac Smith indicated to the MFA Board that, some time in the next five or so years, he might want to retire. The Board responded by selecting Bill and Alice Botti to replace Mac when Mac decided he was ready. Barring a miracle, it appears that the time is at hand. Following surgery in February, Mac was diagnosed with mesothelioma, a chest disease usually associated with asbestos, with no known cure. The symptoms are treatable to give the patient a period with some quality of life, but the life expectancy is measured in months rather than in years. Another chest operation followed at the end of March. Mac now faces a month or more of recovery and the likelihood of chemotherapy. Since he has had limited time and energy to devote to MFA business in the last month and a half and will likely have less in the near future, he suggested to the Board that it is logical to start making the transition to a new Executive Director and Secretary. We all envisioned a different scenario four or five years ago, but this path appears to be the most logical way to proceed under the current circumstances.

The current Executive Director nominated them and lauds the choice of his successors. **Bill and Alice Botti** are highly qualified for the job in many ways. Bill was one of the first Presidents of MFA. Since his retirement from the Michigan DNR as Program Leader for silviculture on the State Forests, Bill has served as a consultant for private woodlot owners. Bill has been Chair of the Publications Committee of MFA and has been contributing to *Michigan Forests* magazine for more years than even he can remember. He authored and illustrated *Green Gold: Michigan Forest History* and, with Mike Moore, has just published a history of the Michigan State Forests. He and Alice were Chairmen for our super Annual Meeting in Eaton Rapids in 2005. Alice has had a lot of experience as a secretary with the Eaton Rapids School system, and both Alice and Bill are skilled with computers. Alice has been involved recently in the continuing distribution of *Green Gold* to schools and has served as a member of the Michigan Forest Foundation Board. Bill and Alice have both been involved in civic pursuits and just returned from a missionary trip delivering eye glasses to people in Honduras. We assume that Bill will have the title of Executive Director and Alice as Secretary.

At this point it is hard to establish an exact schedule for the transition, but we will keep you informed as the reorganization takes place. The Bottis' address is 6120 S. Clinton Trail, Eaton Rapids MI 48827-9585. Their home phone is 517-663-3423. Bill's email address for now is still bottiw1@juno.com. For the immediate future, members should probably start by using the Eaton Rapids address and phone number and try the Ann Arbor address and phone as second choice. We will do our best to make the transition as fast and problem-free as possible.

State Budget Woes Affect Forests and Other Resources

A **Conservation Summit**, held in Lansing last February, brought conservation leaders from across the state to discuss the need for a stable funding source for natural resources. A small committee was empowered to pursue funding ideas. Rachel Kuntzsch, Executive Director of Heart of the Lakes Center for land Conservation Policy, and Donna Stine, Acting Executive Director of Michigan United Conservation Clubs reported in a recent letter: "...we have held discussions with House and Senate leadership, the Governor's office, Director of the state budget office, and various policy leaders..." They have concluded that conservation issues are taking a back seat to other concerns. They also encourage us to write to our legislators expressing our opinions on funding of conservation in Michigan.

If you are able to help with any of these activities, please call Bill or Alice at 517-663-3423.

If you have already volunteered for any of these, please call also.

Thanks.

Volunteers Needed

Our educational trailer, nicknamed "**The Wanigan**", has become quite popular at conservation - related activities around the state. The trailer is an activity sponsored by our education arm, the Michigan Forest Foundation. Its success depends on availability of volunteers to transport and staff the trailer. Transport requires a vehicle with capability of towing a heavy trailer equipped with electric brakes. Staffing the trailer requires someone to be there to answer general questions about the association and forests in general. Questions we can't answer on the spot can be written down and sent to the MFA office for action. This is a fun activity – you get a chance to visit with lots of folks who share your interest in the woods.

Current requests for the Wanigan include:

Lapeer Conservation Dist. April 28
Kensington Heron Festival May 5 & 6
Kirtland Community College May 19
Wild Turkey Festival, Gaylord June 2
Livingston Co. Water Fest June 9
Lapeer Historical Society Aug 25