

THE BUILDING TRADESMAN

Official Publication of the Michigan Building and Construction Trades Council

VOL. 72, NO. 2

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January 27, 2023

SHORT CUTS

Healthy end to '22 with momentum up

The Dodge Momentum Index of U.S. construction ended 2022 on the upswing, improving 6.6 percent in December from the month prior.

"One of the key construction storylines for 2022 was the return of enthusiasm and optimism in prospects for non-residential growth," said Richard Branch, chief economist for Dodge Construction Network, on Jan. 9. "While some of that will likely erode in 2023 as economic growth wanes, increased demand for some building types like data centers, labs, and healthcare buildings will provide a solid floor for the construction sector."

The index is a monthly measure of the initial report for U.S. nonresidential building projects in planning, shown to lead construction spending for nonresidential buildings by a full year.

On a year-over-year basis, the index was 40 percent higher at the end of 2022 than in December 2021; the commercial component was up 51 percent, and institutional planning was 20 percent higher.

Old rule sustains new unions in Congress

WASHINGTON, D.C. (PAI) – Among the first proposals of new House Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) upon being sworn into his new position was the abolition of congressional staffers' right to organize into a union, by a change in House rules.

That won't be easy. Under new rights obtained in the Democratic-run 117th Congress last year, then-Rep. Andy Levin (D-Mich.) led the way to allowing his staff to unionize. Three other members of Congress also allowed their staff to unionize.

Overworked and underpaid House staffers have been organizing for years – but couldn't really form their own union without the House's consent, unlike other federal employees. They got that consent last year.

In a tweeted statement, Levin, a longtime union organizer whose term in Congress just ended, pointed out the big obstacle to ending unionization of Congressional staffers: by repealing the section of law surprisingly adopted in 1995 under House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.), which cleared the way for lawmakers in the last Congress to OK Levin's pro-union resolution, allowing staffers organize if their boss agrees, too.

"GOP may be so reflexively anti-union that they want to strip their employees of the chance to form one – but it's not that easy," Levin tweeted. "Under the Congressional Accountability Act, rights that have been implemented can't simply be taken away absent new legislation to change the act itself."

The Congressional Workers Union said it was undaunted by the GOP threat. "Though we are disappointed to see the GOP-passed rules package include both anti-worker and anti-union language, we are not surprised and have prepared for attacks from the very same party that claims to value America's working class," it said in statement.

Quotable

"For even he who is most greedy for knowledge can achieve no greater perfection than to be thoroughly aware of his own ignorance in his particular field. The more he knows, the more aware he will be of his ignorance."

—Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464)



SETTING IRON at the Ford Central Campus Building in Dearborn is apprentice Mark Sawyer of Iron Workers Local 25. He's employed by Barton Malow.

Central Campus Building fronts Ford-Dearborn transformation

By Marty Mulcahy
Editor
DEARBORN—Ford Motor Co. is at it again.

The company that revo-

lutionized the assembly line, invented the incredibly successful Model T, built the largest industrial complex in the world (the Rouge plant), and began the

\$5 per-day pay scale for its workforce, is currently undergoing another groundbreaking corporate transformation.

Under the banner of its corporate vision of creating "collaborative space to create future mobility solutions," and "help Ford speed product and technology innovation and attract world-class talent," the automaker is spending hundreds of millions of dollars to work with its architectural, construction contracting and building trades partners to transform and modernize new and existing corporate workspaces.

Of course, the multitude of attention to date has been paid to Ford's ongoing transformation of the historic former Michigan Central train station in Detroit's Corktown neighborhood, which sat derelict for decades. But flying under the radar a bit is the ongoing transformation of their west Dearborn campus, highlighted by the construction of a new 2 million-square-foot Central Campus Building along Oakwood Boulevard across from The Henry Ford and Greenfield Village.

Barton Malow is managing the project, whose foundations were set early last year and where some 25,000 tons of

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SETTING 10-INCH HDPE fire suppression lines in front of the Ford Central Campus Building are Connor Gestro and Jim Neal of Sprinkler Fitters Local 704. They're employed by Progressive Mechanical. With them are Laborer Travis Childress of Local 1076 and Kevin White of Operating Engineers Local 324, working the excavator.



FORD MOTOR CO.'S new Central Campus Building is being erected along Oakwood Boulevard in Dearborn, by Barton Malow and a host of subcontractors. The building, which will house about 6,000 employees, will front a revamped Research and Engineering campus for the automaker..

Photo credit: Marty Mulcahy

Minimum wage hikes matter: and there's more at stake than ever in Michigan

On Jan. 1, 8.4 million U.S. workers at the low end of the earnings scale saw their wages collectively raised by more than \$5 billion. It's a considerable boost to income to about 5 percent of all wage earners in the U.S. economy.

According to the labor-backed Economic Policy Institute, 23 states and Washington D.C. raised their minimum wage at the beginning of the year.

Michigan's 23-cent-per-hour increase was the stingiest among those states, raising the hourly minimum wage to \$10.10. The biggest hike was in Nebraska, whose workers on Jan. 1 saw a hike of \$1.50 per hour, to a total of \$10.50 per hour.

"EPI has long documented the importance of the minimum wage and how it can reduce economic inequality," the group said earlier this month.

Washington has the highest minimum wage, \$15.74 an hour. At the other end of the scale, the federal hourly minimum wage is \$7.25 – a pay level floor which exists in 18 states, the vast majority of which have right-to-work laws. Although, in the real world, the number of workers toiling at that wage level is likely very low.

The EPI said the minimum

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Right to strike on trial at U.S. Supreme Court

By Marty Mulcahy
Editor
WASHINGTON, D.C. – If striking Teamsters walk off the job and leave wet concrete in cement mixers, is that the employer's problem, or is the union liable for the cost of the undelivered product?

That question – seemingly settled in decades of precedent – is one of the major issues at play when the U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments on Jan. 10 in a case that could have huge implications for labor unions and their

potential willingness to go on strike.

"The right to strike is on trial today at the U.S. Supreme Court," AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler warned in a Jan. 10 tweet about the case, *Glacier Northwest, Inc. v Teamsters Local 174*. "For nearly a century, federal law has protected workers' right to strike in order to improve their wages, hours and working conditions."

The entirety of the issues, as laid out in the hour-and-a-half session before the Supreme Court, is who can rule whether

a strike is legal or not, whether a union can be sued afterwards if there are damages, and if the National Labor Relations Act, as a federal law governing labor vs management, pre-empts such court cases.

In an earlier ruling the National Labor Relations Board said the 11-day strike Local 174 carried out in Washington state

Dems start new term in state Legislature; labor likes its prospects

By Marty Mulcahy
Editor

LANSING – And they're off. The race to adopt legislation that would restore or establish measures to benefit the state's workers and retirees – and rescind those that haven't – began with a flurry of promising bills introduced in the state Legislature's first day of its new term on Jan. 11.

Now, whether any or all of those bills will be adopted by the newly elected (albeit thin) Democrat majorities in the state House and Senate, remains to be seen. But the prospect of doing things like repealing the Michigan right to work law, resurrecting the Michigan Prevailing Wage Act, and restoring worker pensions that were cut by the state – all during Republican control – put a spring in the step of state Dems and their supporters in the labor movement.

"The Michigan AFL-CIO has spent decades advocating for working families and thankfully we now have a state legislature

Prevailing wage return; RTW and pension tax repeal now on the agenda

that will prioritize the health, safety, and economic security of working people," said Michigan

AFL-CIO President Ron Bieber. "With new leadership and a pro-worker majority, our state legislators are already delivering on their campaign trail

commitments by immediately introducing their priority legislation – reinstating prevailing wage, repealing the retirement tax, and repealing anti-union 'right to work.' Michigan's labor movement is ready to get to work, and we look forward to working with this new legislature to restore worker freedom."

The Michigan Senate is now

(Continued on Page 3)



AN ESTIMATED 10,500 union members and supporters rallied in Lansing on Dec. 6, 2012, to protest the Republican-sponsored legislation that made Michigan the nation's 24th right-to-work state. Gov. Rick Snyder, with protestors below his office window urging him to issue a veto, signed RTW into law that day. Fast forward to 2023, when organized labor is urging the new Democrat majority in Lansing to be the first state in half a century to overturn a right-to-work law.

Building Tradesman file photo

Survey reveals optimism for 2023 by U.S. contractors who are challenged by...a lot

By Marty Mulcahy
Editor

U.S. construction contractors have a lot on their collective minds these days. They're not necessarily pessimistic about the fortunes of the industry, but due to changing market forces, they're forced to work in a realm of uncertainty that's now become a constant in the industry.

A report released Jan. 4 by the Associated General Contractors of America and their partner Sage, the *2023 Construction Outlook National Survey*, polled 1,032 construction contractors nationwide late last year. The results reveal that contractors expect slower growth in 2023 for many

types of private construction, and with greater government spending on infrastructure. Meanwhile, labor shortages loom, supply chain issues persist, and higher materials costs are still wreaking havoc on the project planning process.

"Contractors are optimistic about the construction outlook for 2023, yet they are expecting very different market conditions for the coming year than what they experienced last year," said Stephen E. Sandherr, the association's chief executive officer. "Even as market demand evolves, contractors will continue to be confronted by many of the challenges they faced in 2022, including the impacts of supply chain problems and labor shortages."

Just over half of the respondents in the survey operated as open shop contractors, while only about a quarter were union-only contractors. Nearly two-thirds of respondents were general contractors, with another 22 percent being subcontractors.

Overall, the survey brought glad tidings, with the percentage of respondents who expect the available dollar value of projects to expand in 2023 compared to the percentage who expect it to shrink – is on the positive side for 14 of the 17 categories of construction included in the survey.

Following are some categorical results in the survey that reveal some of the questions and concerns held by U.S. contractors as the 2023 construction season opens:

•Despite the largely positive net readings, respondents are less confident about growth prospects than they were a year ago. For all but three project types, the net reading is less positive than in the 2022 survey. The steepest

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Viewpoints



Don't blame wage hikes

Have you noticed that when workers get better wages, the media blames them for rising prices, but when corporations rake in record profits, there's silence?

That's because corporate profits aren't tracked nearly as closely as worker wages. And the reason why comes down to power.

Every month we get measurements of prices, jobs, and wages – these are the three economic variables we hear repeatedly because they are released each month like clockwork.

They're viewed as the core criteria for how the economy is doing, and drive the national economic conversation. But what's missing from this conversation? Corporate profits.

Without a regular monthly report on profits it's been easy for much of the media and the economic establishment to conveniently ignore them – along with the power that massive corporations wield when it comes to driving up prices.

Now, we do get reports on quarterly earnings from corporations. But those estimates are guesswork at best because corporations often use every accounting gimmick imaginable to hide their true value and reduce their taxes – like Apple stashing profits overseas and Google depreciating assets like crazy.

If we measured corporate profits more often and more reliably, Americans might start to get the full picture about what's driving inflation to historic highs – the power of big corporations to raise their prices higher than their costs are rising.

We could see profit-price inflation – profits pushing up prices – and not pin the blame on so-called wage-price inflation – workers getting raises. Which, by the way, have actually been wage cuts when you account for rising prices.

Instead, the corporate media repeat data about jobs, wages, and prices – analyzing them and framing stories around them. They are used by policymakers at the Federal Reserve and in Congress and the White House.

The conversation drives a continuous cycle: "If prices are up, well it must be because the economy is too hot and workers' wages are too high! It's time to raise interest rates to slow the economy, increase unemployment, and reduce wages!"

And corporations prefer it this way! Because their role in driving inflation isn't even considered. They are given cover to exploit very real supply chain issues – while padding their profit margins. The less up-to-date and accurate information we have about their profits, the harder it is to respond with policies that will combat their pricing power. Not to mention that they cut major checks for political campaigns, so there's little incentive on behalf of many politicians to change this.

The way we try to fix the economy – particularly inflation – is skewed in favor of big corporations and against regular workers, because the way we measure the problem disregards the role of corporations.

If we had timely and accurate information about corporate profits, rather than assuming by default that the Fed must hike interest rates to cool the economy by weakening workers' purchasing power we would weaken corporations' pricing power – through, for example, a windfall profits tax, selective price controls, and tougher antitrust enforcement.

Ultimately, we must build an economy that values workers at least as much as profits. Doing this starts with measuring the right things.

Robert Reich

Professor of Public Policy
University of California- Berkeley

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.

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Bad bosses put workers off track

By Jim Hightower

Why, you might ask, is there so much labor activism these days? Right-wing Republicans claim it's the work of union agitators fomenting class warfare. Bovine excrement!

Rather, it's the accumulation of years of actual class warfare waged against America's workaday majority by avaricious corporate executives. As labor leaders know, unions don't create organizing drives – bad bosses do. And our economy has become dominated by self-enriching, worker-abusing, bad bosses. So, fed-up working families are now rebelling.

Consider the ongoing revolt by railroad workers against the profiteering egos who run America's monopolistic freight train system, which is dominated by just four giants. Forced to work without contracts since 2019, various rail unions joined last year in demanding reforms and prepared to go on a nationwide strike over abusive working conditions.

With a strike date looming in November, antsy corporations were close to agreeing to a contract. But in a last-minute act of raw greed, the bosses rejected a key worker demand that they get a few days of paid time off for family illnesses or to see a doctor! This was purely vindictive bossism, for the monopolists are rolling in cash, hauling off \$21 billion in profits this year alone.

Plus, the same honchos squawking that workers aren't worthy of the basic human need for sick leave were drawing up to \$20 million each in personal pay, while also getting luxury health care benefits and extensive time off with full pay.

Yet, Joe Biden and the Congress caved in to the railway bosses, arbitrarily forcing an "agreement" on the unions that provides only one day a year of paid sick leave for America's essential rail workers.

One day! The message is clear: Don't count on the bosses or Bidens – workers must build a new politics with environmentalists, farmers, consumers, and other "outsiders."



Ford-Dearborn transformation

(Continued from Page 1)

of structural steel will soon be in place. No price tags have been announced on the work, but Ford will likely be spending hundreds of millions of dollars on its current and planned construction projects.

"Sitting along Oakwood Boulevard, close to downtown west Dearborn and The Henry Ford Museum, the Central Campus Building will be finished in 2025 and co-locate more than 6,000 Ford employees – mainly designers and vehicle development teams – creating an inviting, walkable community entrance to the company's (existing) Research & Engineering campus," said Ford in a corporate statement announcing the project. "Ultimately, the master plan envisions a campus of interconnected buildings that could one day house more than 20,000 employees in a flexible, high-tech environment."

The new master plan framework for Ford is the result of a two-year research and planning process led by Snøhetta as lead architect, landscape architect and master planner. The plan, Ford says, is based on three core principles – integration, interaction and co-location – "to advance Ford's vision to serve customers through a winning portfolio, new propulsion choices, autonomous technology and mobility services."

"From the Rouge to Highland Park in Detroit to Dagenham in the U.K., Ford has leveraged innovative workspaces and facilities to inspire our teams to invent the future," said Ford President and CEO Jim Hackett. "Our vision for our Dearborn Research & Engineering campus – and our new Corktown campus and Ann Arbor robotics lab – will enable Ford to lead the next era of transportation and personal mobility, and help us continue our founding mission of driving human progress through the freedom of movement."

Ford's new master plan for its 700-acre property moves its Research & Engineering Center closer to Oakwood Boulevard, and will make it more open and connected to the surrounding neighborhoods. Plans include an increase in public spaces and shared pathways that bring employees and local residents together, as well as coffee shops and restaurants that can serve as meeting places and communal spaces. The plan envisions an intelligent campus built with flexibility so it can adapt to changes in the industry and work practices. With more freedom to decide where and how they want

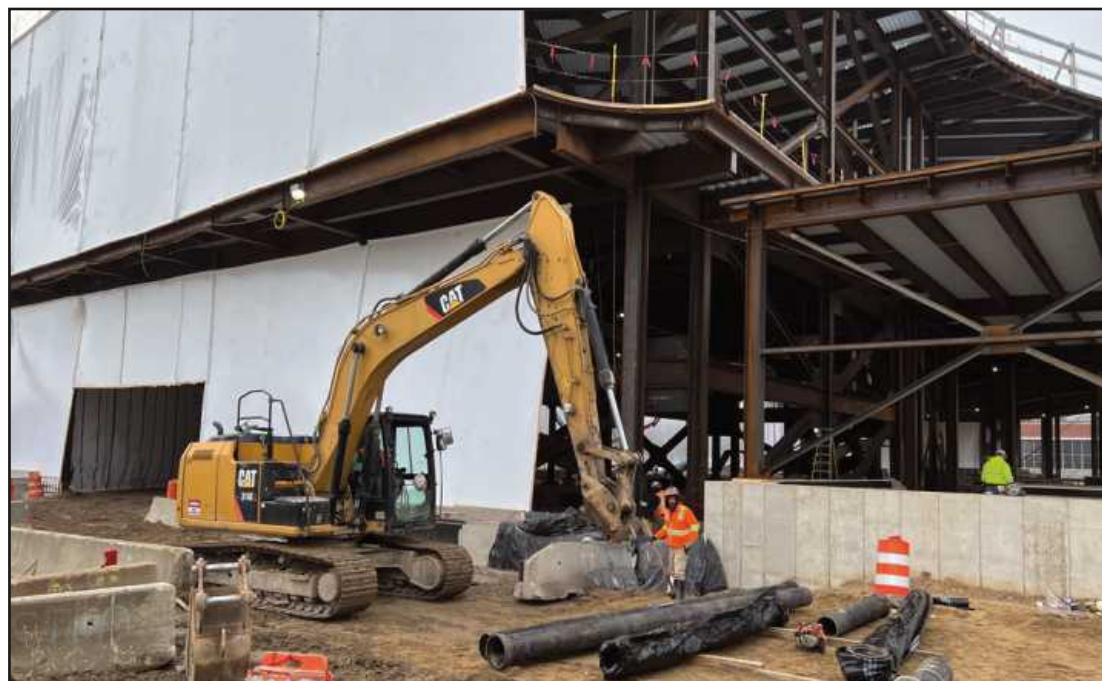
to work, employees can take advantage of adaptable furniture and flexible workspaces outfitted with the latest productivity tools and technology.

Movement within the campus will be pedestrian-focused,

limiting personal vehicle access to the perimeter of the site.

"We envision a quilt of interconnected buildings, with Ford teams woven together in such a way that enables collaboration and innovation in its transformed

workspace," said Craig Dykers, co-founder of architectural firm Snøhetta. "Natural and built environments, employees and communities, moving in one Ford ecosystem, and connected with the world around it."



AT WORK IN FRONT of the Ford Central Campus Building in Dearborn are Rob Bressler of Laborers Local 1191 and Todd Schramm of Operating Engineers Local 324. They're employed by Aristeo.

Minimum wage hikes matter: and there's more at stake than ever in Michigan

(Continued from Page 1)

wage increases on Jan. 1 "varies considerably by state," with some the result of built-in inflation-linked adjustments, others through changes in state law or the implementation of ballot amendments.

"Most of the affected workers (54.9 percent) are age 25 or older, and nearly half (44.8 percent) work full time," the EPI said. "Although workers with only a high school degree or less education are the group most likely to be affected, 40.9 percent of affected workers have at least some college experience. Importantly, more than 2 million parents will get a raise."

Michigan's new \$10.10 per hour minimum wage likely isn't the last word on the matter. As we have reported, in 2018 a citizens petition drive organized by One Fair Wage successfully garnered enough petition signatures to allow voters to decide on raising Michigan's minimum wage to \$12 an hour by 2022; importantly, with annual inflation adjustments.

The Republican-led state Legislature basically sidestepped and superseded the successful petition effort by raising the minimum wage before it took effect, and replaced it with a lower wage. Instead of the \$12 an hour wage by 2022, the GOP forced through a law that increased

the minimum wage rates more slowly, ultimately to \$12.05 per hour by 2030.

On July 19, 2022, the Michigan Court of Claims issued a decision that agreed with that challenge and voided the amended versions of the Republican-backed Michigan Improved Workforce Opportunity Wage Act and Paid Medical Leave Act in favor of their original, unamended versions as set by the petition language. On July 29, the Michigan Court of Claims

entered an order staying the effect of this decision until Feb. 19, 2023, to give employers and the relevant state agencies time to accommodate the changes required by the ruling.

The Court of Claims' ruling has been appealed. Pending final resolution of the appeal, and lifting of the stay, under the potential implementation of the originally adopted petition, the minimum wage rate in Michigan for 2023 would be \$13.03 per hour and \$11.73 for tipped employees.

"Know how to ask. There is nothing more difficult for some people, nor for others, easier."

–Baltasar Gracian

"Good ideas are not adopted automatically. They must be driven into practice with courageous patience."

–Hyman Rickover (1900 - 1986)

"The most important thing in communication is to hear what isn't being said."

–Peter Drucker (1909 - 2005)

"Sometimes life is going to hit you in the head with a brick. Don't lose faith."

–Steve Jobs (1955 - 2011)

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Just joking

Two guys are in the local branch of their bank on their lunch break, when armed robbers burst in. While two of the robbers take the money from the tellers, the third lines the customers up against a wall, including the two guys, and proceeds to take their wallets, phones, watches, and other valuables.

While this is going on the first guys sees what's happening at the end of the line and jams money into the other guy's pocket.

Without looking down at his pocket, the second guy whispers, "what is this?"

The first guy responds, "that's the \$50 bucks I owe you!"



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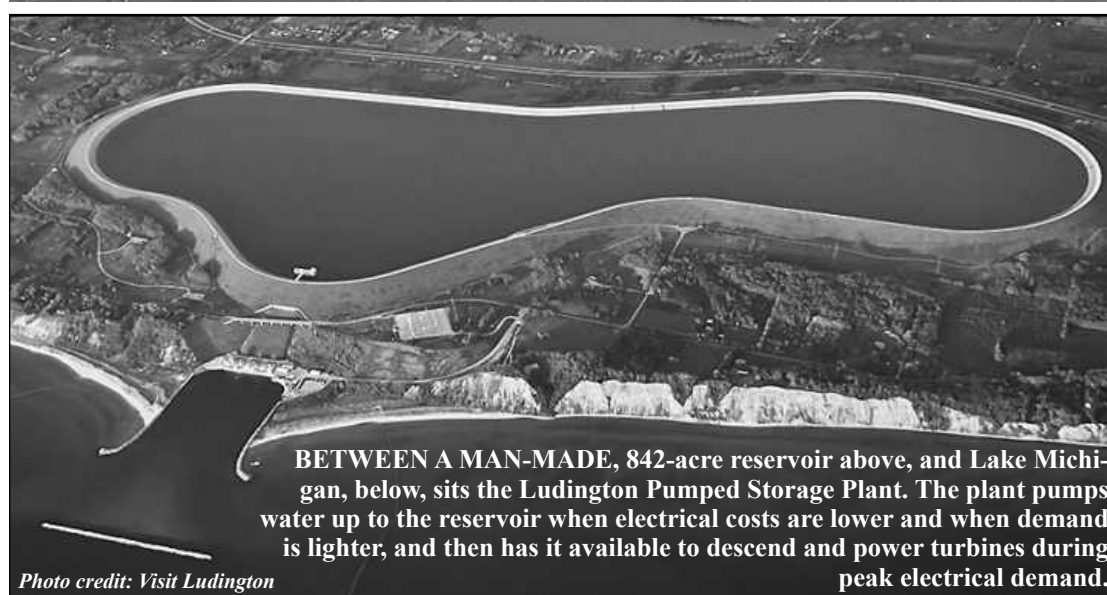
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Aiello Law Group has just released our 2023 Construction Worker's Daily Logbook in both a print and digital version! We have provided logbooks to Michigan's building trades for over 30 years.

The traditional paper version can be picked up in our office, your union hall, the Building Trades office at 1640 Porter in Detroit, or can be mailed directly to you by giving us a call at (313) 964-4900. The digital version can be found in the App Store for Apple or Google Play for Android. Simply search for "Aiello Daily Logbook."

BUILDING MICHIGAN!**Ludington Pumped Storage Plant
HISTORY IN THE MAKING**

By Marty Mulcahy



BETWEEN A MAN-MADE, 842-acre reservoir above, and Lake Michigan, below, sits the Ludington Pumped Storage Plant. The plant pumps water up to the reservoir when electrical costs are lower and when demand is lighter, and then has it available to descend and power turbines during peak electrical demand.

The massive Ludington Pumped Storage plant, relying on an 842-acre water reservoir holding 27 billion gallons of water, in no way resembles any form of a man-made battery.

But the hydroelectric plant sure acts like a big battery, and is often referred to as such. And the plant's co-owners – Consumers Energy (51 percent ownership) and DTE Energy (49 percent) – rely on the plant's 2.29 million megawatt capacity "as a key component to helping both energy providers replace coal generated power with clean, renewable energy that will keep Michigan powered," says Consumers Energy.

Construction on the plant took place from 1969 to 1974, with the first unit coming online in 1972.

"When opening for operation in 1972, it was the largest pumped storage facility in the world and remains to be one of the largest hydroelectric power plants in terms of capacity in the United States," says Consumers Energy. "Considered a modern marvel, The American Society of Civil Engineers awarded the project the Outstanding Civil Engineering Achievement in 1973, and it was named one of the top 10 civil engineering projects of the 20th Century in Michigan. At the time, the facility cost about \$327 million to build, which is roughly \$2.7 billion today when calculating for inflation."

Despite the utility industry's ongoing, seismic move to greener energy sources, the construction of pumped storage plants, especially in the U.S., will almost certainly remain rare. The U.S. has 43 pumped storage facilities with a combined capacity of 22 gigawatts, which per unit is on par with the output of that many nuclear plants (a sector whose new construction is also rare). The construction of new pumped storage plants is bogged down by a wide variety of regulatory, economic, geographic, environmental and logistical barriers.

A system of pumped electrical storage is a fairly elementary process – in good part because all you need are pumps, and an upper-level water basin, chutes to channel water, and then sweet, dependable gravity to drop the water to power turbine generators.

"Ludington Pumped Storage is a hydroelectric power plant that uses stored water at elevation to function like a battery," says Consumers Energy. "When electricity prices are low (on a daily basis, that is usually overnight and during morning hours), the large reservoir above Lake Michigan is filled with water from through six large pipes 28 feet tapering to 24 feet in diameter, called

penstocks, each equipped with a reversible pump turbine.

It takes about nine hours to move enough water from Lake Michigan to fill the reservoir.

"When demand for electricity rises, the plant is dispatched and water produces power like a river hydro dam turning turbines as it is released 363 feet back into Lake Michigan. With a 2,292-megawatt capacity, the Ludington Pumped Storage Plant can power a city with a population of approximately 1.4 million people for about eight hours."

The Ludington Pumped Storage Plant can be activated quickly to begin producing power when demand rises. In fact, when the power grid experienced a cascading blackout affecting 55 million people in Ohio, Michigan, Pennsylvania and other states on Aug. 14, 2003, employees at the plant were able to quickly respond and start up the Ludington plant. As a result, only about 100,000 Consumers Energy customers lost power in the blackout.

That quick start-up of energy production is also important for when the state's air conditioners are turned on en masse during summer heat waves. But the need to diversify away from baseload coal plants was also recognized as an important consideration in building the plant.

"There were two reasons why Consumers Power and Detroit Edison decided on such an expensive undertaking," said a 2010 article by Paul Peterson in the *Ludington Daily News* looking back on the plant's construction. "One was their need to anticipate future electricity needs, and second was to create a well-balanced and thus more economical power system for Michigan. It took 10 years of feasibility studies before the utilities determined that the project could be profitably built. Finally, on Feb. 28, 1961, Consumers Power announced it was planning to construct the plant. "But it wasn't until March, 1969 that the first trees were cleared and work started. 10 years after the first feasibility study."

The construction of the plant was a huge economic deal for Ludington, a small town on the shore Lake Michigan with a population of about 9,000 in 1970. Favorable geography, and its location next to the big lake, made the project possible. It took two years to bulldoze the 2.5-mile long, one-mile wide, 100-foot deep reservoir that can hold 27 billion gallons of water.

"The first subcontractor on the job," said the *Ludington Daily News*, "was Maclean Construction Co. of Lansing, which later moved an office to Ludington.

"Maclean cleared the brush and trees from the site, and was

soon joined by Walsh Construction Co. of Valparaiso, Ind., and Canonia Construction Co. of South Haven. Both companies were highly efficient earth-movers and undertook the digging of the reservoir. Within four months, nine other major contractors had joined the project. Altogether, there were 29 contractors and sub-contractors."

The *Construction Equipment Guide* said "the poor sandy soils available for construction made for careful compaction and required the reservoir bottom be sealed with a five-to-eight foot layer of impervious clay. The waterside of the dike was paved with sandwich layers of asphaltic material and two surface courses of 2½ inch-thick hydraulic asphalt concrete (HAC). The HAC contains a high proportion of mineral filler to make it virtually impervious."

Ebasco was the project's architect-engineer and general contractor.

"Everywhere you looked there were workers in yellow, blue, red and white hard hats," said the *Ludington Daily News*. "Each color designated a trade or company supervisor. As the number of workers swelled, so did the number of crafts that finally totaled 12. Through the first two months of prep work there were some 150 workers on the job. By the winter of 1970 there were 2,000, and at its peak – Aug. 1, 1972 – the payroll reached 2,796. Ebasco alone had 150 engineers and office staff." The town and region struggled to find housing for all the workers.

The first delivery of Hitachi pumps and turbines began arriving from Japan in 1970. "On Oct. 23, 1972, the pumps were turned on and Lake Michigan water rushed up the penstocks and into the 842-acre reservoir, and the first generator was successfully tested," said the *Daily News*. "McCready said that was the most impressive day of the project. 'I turned to Bob Polvi (a top supervisor for Ebasco) and said, 'By God it works!'

"Of course we really didn't have any doubt it would work," said Bob Johnson, the on-site supervisor for Consumers Power. "You don't spend more than \$300 million and wonder if it is going to work."

During the past decade, a number of building trades workers made their own history at the plant. They took part in a large-scale project to increase the generating capacity of the plant by replacing the original six turbines, increasing the generating capacity of each unit by 50 megawatts for a total increase of 300 megawatts. In addition, the new units reduce the time to fill the reservoir and reduce the frequency of scheduled outages. The upgrades are expected to extend the plant's life by 40 years.

**Right to strike on trial
at U.S. Supreme Court**

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company said in court documents that their losses included physical destruction of some of the company's concrete as well as the loss of \$100,000 fee from a client.

The Washington State Supreme Court tossed Glacier's suit. Meanwhile, the National Labor Relations Board filed a labor law-breaking complaint against Glacier. Glacier took its loss in the state court all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, seeking the right to sue – and for it and the rest of the corporate class to cripple unions financially with that threat when strikes take place.

The National Labor Relations Act of 1935 protects workers' right to strike, and until now, has protected striking workers from liability for resulting economic damage to employers. In fact, over the past nine decades, inflicting economic damage on employers is essentially the aim of most strikes, through suspending sale of a product or interrupting productivity. Violence or deliberate destruction of employer property by striking workers has rightfully been given separate attention by the courts.

But now in the Glacier case, the U.S. Supreme Court – which leans 6-3 to the conservative right – has taken up a labor matter that has traditionally been left in the purview of the NLRB and has already been ruled upon by Washington's Supreme Court. Labor union leaders are worried: this is the first case in which an employer and its legal team have felt comfortable to take a case to the Supreme Court to get relief from the damage of a loss of perishable goods. "It's like allowing employers to put a tax on the right to strike," Sharon Block, executive director of the Labor and Worklife Program at Harvard Law School, told CBS MoneyWatch.

According to *The Slate*, Glacier's attorney (former Trump Administration Solicitor General Noel Francisco) "began his argument by comparing the spoilage of a partial day's worth of concrete with federal security guards leaving their posts in the middle of a terrorist threat" or "a ferryboat crew abandoning ship in the middle of a river." But both of those extreme situations are not at issue here and would likely instead be heard in a criminal case.

Instead, according to a Cornell Law School analysis, "Local 174 argues that the drivers engaged in the 'mere act of stopping work, and did not intentionally destroy Glacier's property. Local 174 contends that strikes are protected even if the timing results in economic harm or makes such harm foreseeable. First, Local 174 points to the language of the NLRA, which states a strike is protected even if it causes an 'interruption of operations.'"

"Second, Local 174 cites several cases where opportunistically timed strikes were deemed protected, including a strike at a poultry plant and a strike at a cheese factory timed to maximize product spoilage. According to Local 174, in both the prior cases and on the present facts, there was no 'affirmative' act that caused physical damage; instead, the workers merely stopped working."

If Glacier Northwest wins the right to sue, after the fact, its victory opens the way to similar lawsuits by firms against unions nationwide for alleged "property damage" by strikers. Such suits can break union finances and thus endanger the right to strike.

"The dispute is about whether employers can sue unions for economic harm, including that caused by loss of perishable products, that results from workers going on strike," write Terry Gerstein and Jenny Hunter

in the *Slate* article. "Glacier could potentially open the doors to lawsuits against unions anytime they strike, severely weakening this crucial and federally protected right. The case has drawn attention as a broad attack on the labor movement just when workers nationwide are voicing their desire for unions, organizing and striking at levels not seen for decades."

"Workers in America have the fundamental right to strike, and American workers have died on picket lines to protect it," said Teamsters President Sean O'Brien. "The ability to withhold your labor is the one powerful

tool throughout the history of unionization that has ensured workers can improve their working conditions. This right is now on trial at the Supreme Court. The anti-worker case before the court is undemocratic and disregards long-standing legal precedent. For both the American worker and our entire country, the Supreme Court must affirm the lower court's ruling that the legality of the strike falls exclusively within the jurisdiction of the National Labor Relations Board."

The Supreme Court will issue its decision by the end of June.

(Press Associates contributed)

**Dems start new term
in state Legislature;
labor likes its prospects**

(Continued from Page 1)

led by new Majority Leader Winnie Brinks (D-Grand Rapids). Together with new Speaker of the House Joe Tate (D-Detroit), they laid out their party's priorities for the 102nd session of the state Legislature. Dems haven't held unified control of state government for 40 years. The House and Senate Democratic leaders highlighted a series of bills that they said reflect their "shared priorities across the Democratic caucuses to put Michigan families first."

"For the Michigan construction industry, one of the bills they referenced specifically include the restoration of the state's prevailing wage law, which was repealed by GOP lawmakers in 2018. Vitaly important to the state's construction industry, both union and nonunion, prevailing wage maintains fair wage levels in an industry notorious for having unscrupulous contractors hiring under-paid, often immigrant workers, in order to under-bid and win work from legitimate contractors.

House Bill 4007, introduced by State Reps. Brenda Carter (D-Pontiac) and Victoria Klinefelt (D-Eastpointe) would restore prevailing wage in Michigan. "With this bill, I aim to ensure that Michigan workers are treated with dignity and respect by ensuring a fair wage for Michigan workers," Carter said. "We must ensure our hardworking residents receive wages in line with the value of their skills and service. Competitive wages are necessary for Michigan to attract and retain a highly trained workforce. We do not want to see critical infrastructure projects built by contractors that cut corners."

"Also up for consideration is the repeal of the state's decade-old right-to-work law, which has allowed workers to enjoy the benefits of a union contract without paying dues. The big-money backers of the law have said that repeal of RTW would make Michigan more business-friendly, which has not borne itself out over the past decade. Studies predicted that unions lose members and political clout when RTW laws are introduced, and indeed, union membership has dropped by 143,000 members in Michigan since 2013.

Without evidence, the anti-union Associated Builders and Contractors – Greater Michigan Chapter, said "restoring prevailing wage and repealing right to work. Both would be devastating to economic growth and the construction industry in Michigan."

And the National Right-to-Work Committee's president, Mark Mix – yes, there is a group devoted to spreading RTW laws – told the *Detroit Free Press*: "Are we going to fight them? You betcha, we're going to fight" the effort to overturn Michigan's law. Michigan would be the first state in 60 years to overturn a right-to-work law.

"Another major policy change proposed in legislation introduced by Dems would eliminate the loathed "retirement tax." In 2011, Gov. Rick Snyder and the GOP Legislature instituted a new tax on pension income in order to pay for a corresponding \$1.6 billion tax cut for Michigan businesses.

In the House, state Rep. Angela Witwer (D-Delta Twp.) and in the Senate, Kevin Hertel (D-St. Clair Shores) sponsored legislation to reverse the 2011 tax on pension income. "For over a decade, Michigan families have been waiting for a legislature that would put their needs first," said Hertel. "Repealing the retirement tax not only keeps our promise to retirees by keeping money in their pockets, but it also adds to our state's wonderful natural resources and recreation opportunities as a way to attract seniors and families looking for a place to call home."

"Democrat lawmakers are also looking to enable Michigan workers to keep more of their money through an increased Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). They are also seeking to expand the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act. "Our commitment to make good on our promise to advance the priorities of the people is made clear with the introduction of these first bills of the session," Tate said.

Said Brinks: "These initial bills represent our collective commitment to expanding rights and opportunities for the people of Michigan. With these first bills we are setting a new standard of leadership that listens to the needs of the people."

The 56-54 Dem majority in the state House and 20-18 majority in the state Senate leaves zero room for error when it comes time to call lawmakers' votes for the pro-worker, pro-retiree agenda items. Although, some Republican lawmakers did not support Michigan's right to work law when it was adopted in 2012, and there was some GOP opposition when the Michigan Prevailing Wage Act was repealed in 2018.

But there is certain to be major conservative pushback to the Dems' agenda. A Jan. 12 statement from the Michigan Chamber of Commerce said the business group "is prepared to oppose repeal of the right to work law and fight for the freedom of employees to decide whether to pay dues or other equivalent fees to labor unions as a condition of employment and protect our state's economic competitiveness. We will also oppose efforts to reinstate Michigan's prevailing wage law on taxpayer-funded projects and require union wage rates to be paid on these construction projects regardless of whether the workers are represented by a labor agreement."



DURING CONSTRUCTION in the early 1970s, shown uncovered are the intake and penstock encasement at the Ludington Pumped Storage Plant.

Photo source: Newkirk Electric

The Building Tradesman ISSN-007-3717

is the Official Publication of the Michigan Building and Construction Trades

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1640 Porter St. Detroit, MI 48216
Phone: (313) 961-3800
Fax: (313) 961-2467
**Union members with address changes
are asked to contact their local union.**

The Building Tradesman is published bi-weekly (every other Friday) by the Michigan Building and Construction Trades Council, Detroit office. 1640 Porter St., Detroit, MI 48216

Subscription Rate \$15 annually
(group rate for unions)**Editor/Photographer**

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(734) 558-6955

Periodical mail postage paid at Detroit, MI and additional mailing offices.

Printed at Grand Blanc Printing,
a union shop



Local 36
Elevator
Constructors

Elevator Constructors Local 36
DETROIT – ALL MEMBERS ARE INFORMED that our next regular MEMBERSHIP MEETING IS ON MONDAY February 27, 2023, AT 5:30pm at 1640 Porter St. Detroit, MI.

Any changes to this schedule or venue will be in the Building Trades Article or sent via email.

Attention all Mechanics, if you take a call on a piece of equipment that has water damage, Fire Department shuts down or damage in general, you must call and notify the City of Detroit Elevator Inspector. Also, if a piece of equipment is red tagged by an Inspector, City or State you must notify the inspector before doing any work on that piece of equipment.

Once again, I can't stress enough how important it is to get your licenses once you are eligible to take the test. Michigan is one of very few states that have licensing to be able to work on elevators, and without that any Joe Blow could do our jobs. Getting your licenses, following the codes, and doing it the right way helps preserve our work.

Attention all members who took advantage of the Code Outreach classes and Code Tabbing classes: Brother Scott Hultstrom is tentatively planning on retiring in March, he has been instrumental in helping all of you take and pass the State of Michigan test with these classes and we would like to show our appreciation from Local 36. We would like to get a collection together to give him a nice retirement gift for all his hard work and dedication putting on all these classes. You can drop off any donations to the Hall. The EIWP code outreach and tabbing classes have been cancelled for the time being and they will be finding a replacement for Brother Hultstrom. I will send out an email when this information is available.

If anyone is interested in QEI training, please call the Hall so we can build a potential class list, we need a few more guys to host it locally. Call the hall if you need more information.

Anyone interested in getting certified in Welding, you can sign up with NEIEP @ Local 85 or call Mike Janca.

ATTENTION ALL RETIREES, if you requested an Honorary Card in the past year, please contact the Hall. We have multiple cards at the Hall, but we don't have updated numbers or emails to be able to contact you. We can make arrangements to get it to you if you can't make it to a meeting.

Attention All Apprentices, Classes will start the week of Jan. 30, 2023, if you haven't been contacted or know what day your class is please call the hall. We would like to thank all Apprentices for their hard work and turning in your OJTs in a timely manner, attendance in class and doing make up classes – this has NOT gone unrecognized. Check your NEIEP emails frequently for any additional information.

OJT forms need to be filled out COMPLETELY by the 9th day of the following month. **There is NO excuse for these to be late!!!**

Attention All Temporary Mechanics, your Temporary Mechanic's Agreement MUST be signed by the end of each month. If you can't make the union meeting to sign your agreement, then come down to the hall the next morning.

Attention All Members, If you are going to be working in another local you MUST call in to their hall to make sure it is ok to work. Don't take your supervisor's word for it.

If you start a new job in MOD/construction, you MUST call those jobs into the hall!!!

I sent out an email about mandatory continuing education (ARTICLE XIX Par.6) for Mechanics passing the Mechanics exam on or after July 9, 2022, anyone who passed before July 9, 2022, this is optional. If you have any questions about this, you can contact the hall.

If you are NOT receiving my emails, contact the Hall so I can get you on the email list. We would like to extend get well wishes to all Brothers and Sisters on our sick list.

(Continued next column)

Survey reveals optimism for U.S. contractors

(Continued from Page 1)

downturn in expectations is in multifamily residential construction.

•What, me worry? The sheer number of concerns contractors have for 2023 is striking. When asked to name their biggest concerns, at least 63 percent of respondents all checked off "economic slow-down/recession," "material costs," "insufficient supply of workers or subcontractors," "rising interest rates/financing costs," "project delays due to availability/supply chain issues" and "rising direct labor costs."

•Federal spending. A significant amount of hope seems to be placed in the federal spending associated with the Congressional passage in 2021 of the \$1.5 trillion Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. So far, it's apparent the money from the federal taps hasn't started flowing much. Only 5 percent of respondents say they have worked on new projects funded by the law, while 6 percent have won bids but have not started work. Five percent say they have bid on projects but have not won any awards yet, whereas 21 percent plan to bid on projects but say nothing suitable has been offered yet.

•Upping the headcount. More than two-thirds of the contractor-respondents expect to add to their workforce in 2023, compared to only 11 percent who expect a decrease. While just under half of firms expect to increase their headcount by 10 percent or less, nearly one-quarter anticipate larger increases. Only 11 percent expect a decrease in their workforce.

•Workers, from where? Where are contractors going to get those warm bodies? An

overwhelming 80 percent report they are having a hard time filling some or all salaried or hourly craft positions, compared to only 8 percent who say they are having no difficulty. (The rest have no openings). In addition, the majority – 58 percent – of respondents says either hiring will continue to be hard or will become harder. Only 15 percent say it will become easier or remain easy to hire, while 27 percent expect no change.

•Show me the money. Workforce shortages likely explain why nearly three-quarters of firms increased base pay rates in 2022 compared to 2021, a higher rate than the previous year. Additionally, one-third of firms provided workers incentives or

bonuses in 2022. And more than one-fourth of the firms increased their portion of benefit contributions and/or improved employee benefits. Only 7 percent offered no increases in pay, incentives or benefits in 2022.

•Never-ending supply chain hiccups. Only 9 percent of firms report they did not have any significant supply chain problems in 2022. To cope, more than two-thirds of respondents have reacted by accelerating purchases after winning contracts. A majority turned to alternative suppliers. Almost half have specified alternative materials or products, while close to one-quarter stockpiled items before winning contracts.

•Delays. Most contractors experienced project delays or cancellations in 2022. Only a third reported no projects had been postponed or canceled, while 39 percent reported a postponed project was rescheduled, and strikingly, 36 percent had a project postponed or canceled last year that has not been rescheduled. Thirteen percent of firms have already experienced a canceled or postponed project that was set to begin in early 2023.

"The main reason for cancellations and postponements was rising costs – for construction, financing, insurance, etc. – which was cited by nearly half of contractors," said Ken Simonson, the AGC's chief economist.



Brushing up the boulevard

GUIDING HIS CAT skid steer loader with a road cleaning attachment in front of the Ford Central Campus Building under construction on Oakwood Boulevard in Dearborn (and shown here across from Greenfield Village/The Henry Ford) is Keith Murphy of Operating Engineers Local 324. He's employed by Site Development.

"Follow the path of the unsafe, independent thinker. Expose your ideas to the dangers of controversy. Speak your mind and fear less the label of 'crackpot' than the stigma of conformity. And on issues that seem important to you, stand up and be counted at any cost."

–Thomas J. Watson (1874-1956)

"Be sincere; be brief; be seated."

–Franklin D. Roosevelt (1882 - 1945)

Local 36, con't

Attention All Members, the picnic was approved on Jan. 23, 2023 at the membership meeting with a cap of \$80 per member. We need volunteers for a picnic committee to ensure we have a great picnic this year. We will meet every month before the Executive board meeting, first meeting being Feb. 20, 2023. If you would like to volunteer, please call the hall or contact Jon Bujan, Picnic Committee Chair @ (586) 787-114.

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By Sarah Lapshan
Michigan Department
of Natural Resources

Spending more time with family and friends, exercising more, learning a new skill or hobby, saving money, living life to the fullest – according to GoS-kills.com, these are among the top 10 most common resolutions people make as the calendar flips to a brand new year.

All are perfectly respectable goals, but why not shake things up a bit and resolve to take action that's good for both you and the world around you? We've got some ideas to get you started.

Choose native plants, trees and shrubs. It's not too early to start thinking about spring tree planting. An easy way to ensure you're planting native, regional trees and shrubs that are most likely to thrive where you live is to work with your local conservation district or nature center, according to Ed Shaw, Carl T. Johnson Hunting and Fishing Center interpreter and coordinator of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources' Outdoor Skills Academy.

"Genetic diversity in trees is just as important as it is among fish and wildlife species," Shaw said. "Now is when you want to get your orders in, too, because it gives the conservation districts and nature centers time to place their orders."

Visit MACD.org to find your district, learn about programs, place an order and get on the mailing list. When spring comes around and you do plant new trees, drop a pin in our interactive map to add your trees to our statewide count that's part of the Trillion Trees Campaign.

Support forests of all ages. Say the word "forest" and most people think of thick stands of mature trees that stretch to the sky. If you've been to the Porkies in the western Upper Peninsula's Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park or Hartwick Pines in Grayling, you've seen true gems – some Michigan trees are hundreds of years old. But these old-growth forests alone aren't enough to support the fish and wildlife that depend on them for food and shelter.

Craig Kasmer is the interpreter at Hartwick Pines State Park. Over the years he has talked with tens of thousands of visitors about the value of different tree



Outdoors



Resolutions to enjoy, protect Michigan



DIFFERENT SPECIES and age classes of trees provide the best habitat for different wildlife species, like the Kirtland's warbler, shown here, which prefers to nest in young jack pine forests.

Photo credit: Michigan Department of Natural Resources

types and ages.

"Some 65 percent of the 20 million acres of forest land in Michigan is privately owned," he said. "Most private forest landowners don't like to cut trees, and I get that, but we have to have forests of different ages to provide the different habitat that different species need to survive."

Kasmer said that if all private landowners do nothing to create young, successional forest types, there is a whole slew of species that are going to be lost – and we'll wind up with only birds and animals that like to live in old-growth forests. The Kirtland's warbler, for example, only nests in jack pine forests that are 5-20 years old.

If you or someone you know owns private forest land, consider working with a forester to develop a plan for your forest. Explore the DNR's resources for private forest landowners to learn more about the Forest Stewardship and Forest Legacy programs.

Be a savvy searcher. We get it. Spending a day outdoors is a treat, and sometimes you want to take home a little something you find there. In most cases that's OK, but when foraging for wild

foods, make sure you know ahead of time what you can take and what needs to stay.

Wild berries and mushrooms? Enjoy! Wildflowers? Leave them there, said Shaw, especially if a bloom is on the protected, endangered or threatened list; Google the "Michigan Natural Features Inventory rare plants list" for more information.

"We want everyone to enjoy the wildflowers," Shaw said, "but leaving them where they are is the best choice. It also supports critical pollination processes that so many species rely on."

No matter what you're looking for – morels, sap for maple syrup, berries or something else – Google the DNR's foraging for wild food webpage. It has the facts on what is permitted for harvest (and where), what to leave in the wild to protect sensitive and rare species, and how to safely prepare anything you plan to eat.

Be a history hero. During any visit to state-managed lands, including shorelines and bottomlands, please respect historic structures and sites and leave in place any artifacts you may find. Everyone shares a responsibility

Discover CCC connections.

Many people who visit Hartwick Pines have some understanding of the role played by the Civilian Conservation Corps in building our state's infrastructure and structures, including within state parks. If one of your relatives was among the 100,000-plus young Michigan men enrolled in the federal Depression-era Civilian Conservation Corps, head to Roscommon!

"Hillary Pine, who manages the Higgins Lake Nursery and CCC Museum and Nursery, not too far south of Hartwick Pines, said every year there are a lot of folks who come in and say, 'You know, my great-grandfather was in the CCC ...,'" said Kasmer. "If you know what camp your relatives were at, you can go to the museum in Roscommon and look through the panels of pictures to find them. It's great to see those connections happen."

If you want to explore even more Michigan history, add other museums and historic sites to your list of "must see" destinations for 2023. Start at Michigan.gov/MHC/Museums.

Know your invasives. Kasmer, while recently visiting the metro Detroit area, noticed that both sides of the road he was on were full of phragmites – that tall, grayish-green, invasive reed that seems to crop up everywhere – but he remembered knowing it by another name.

"As I kid, I was told that was

bullrush," he said. "I bet a lot of people learned it the same way, and there wasn't much discussion then about what an invasive species even was, or why it posed a problem. Now, though, we see how invasive species can cause deforestation, reduce fish populations and alter valuable habitat. We see all too clearly the problems they cause."

Visit Michigan.gov/Invasives to learn more about identifying and reporting problem species; get tips on actions hunters, anglers, boaters and others can take to reduce the spread of invasives; and explore the popular NotMiSpecies webinar series. It covers everything from rock snot (yes, a true aquatic invasive species) to protecting your own backyard or neighborhood from damaging bugs like spongy moth or spotted lanternfly.

Make time for the outdoors.

In 2021, Kasmer said he noticed a lot more families heading north to view Kirtland's warblers in the young jack pine forests. Many said the motivation for their trip actually stemmed from having time at home the year before – a rare benefit of the COVID-19 pandemic – giving them a chance to stop and watch their bird feeders. "They said their kids would ask, 'What's that bird, and what's that one?' and it sparked a whole new interest in knowing more about what's around them," Kasmer said.

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