



ARVC Messenger

2006 Fall Convention & Campground Tour

October 22, 23 & 24

Quality Inn, Houghton Lake, Michigan

Don't miss this years Fall Convention & Campground Tour. We are very excited to announce that Senator Michelle McManus will be joining us on Monday morning for breakfast at the hotel, a little change to our normal schedule to accommodate hers. Senator McManus is the State Senator for the area we will be visiting. She has been a great supporter of the Tourism, RVing & Camping Industry. Working closely with ARVC Michigan on several bills that have been passed. Looking to the future we are very interested in working with her on the new legislation that will set new fees for ground water discharge in 2007. Senator McManus will update us on what she has been doing in Lansing and I am sure she will have lots of time to hear from us on issues we see coming up in the future.

Our home base will be the beautiful Quality Inn on M-55 in Houghton Lake. We will start out Sunday night with a little meet and greet and then have a Cracker-barrel to fill the evening, Cracker barrels are always wonderful ways to get information on topics of interest to all owners and operators. Monday morning we will start off with breakfast with Senator McManus and then load the busses to visit campgrounds in Houghton Lake and Harrison. We have four planned and may add a fifth if time permits. The four we have confirmed are West Houghton Lake Campground, Houghton Lake Travel Park, Wooded Acres Campground & Countryside Campground. The owners of these parks are looking forward to showing off there businesses to all of you.

After the Tour we will return to the Quality Inn for dinner on Monday night. After dinner we will have our Annual business meeting and Elections. Tuesday Breakfast will be on your own with educational seminars in the morning and we will end the convention with lunch on Tuesday.

This is a great opportunity for owners and operators to get together and see what other operators are doing in their parks first hand. Have a chance to hear from someone who is working in Lansing everyday and supports our industry. Attend the annual meeting and elections. Learn at the educational seminars. Most of all and maybe most important get a chance to catch up with old friends that you only see at these meetings and make new friends that you will be looking forward to seeing again soon. We hope to see all of you at the Fall Convention, October 22, 23 & 24, 2006

The Michigan Tourism Strategic Plan

"a plan for the industry, by the industry"

You've probably already heard about the Michigan Tourism Strategic Plan Project, a grassroots effort to create the first-ever comprehensive strategic plan for Michigan's tourism industry. This effort is being coordinated by the Tourism Industry Planning Council (over 75 key organizations within Michigan's tourism industry), Michigan State University and Travel Michigan.

Work is currently underway on eight broad issue areas that have been identified as key to the plan. Teams have been formed and are currently assessing opportunities and barriers within each area. Their work is being based on the team's knowledge of the industry, feedback received from over 250 industry stakeholders who participated in the statewide regional listening sessions, and information gathered from other industry experts. As teams have discussed and evaluated information from each area, "issue statements" have now been developed which will guide their work and help form the foundation of the Plan.

What's your opinion?

Here's your opportunity to review the efforts currently underway and provide feedback. Please enter the URL below to go to the Plan's home page and click on the "Comment Form" button to review the eight areas and to have an opportunity to comment on each. www.tourismplan.msu.edu

SITE NIGHTS WERE FLAT IN 2006

It seems the fuel prices and the economy may have been at fault for a less than banner year for our members. After having talked with many members throughout the state, Only a couple said they were up from 2005 and those parks had done construction that increased the sites they had available or they were newly built in the last couple of years. After more that a decade of growth for our members it is hard to take a flat year. As the consumer gets adjusted to the higher fuel prices and the economy here in Michigan gets better that upward trend will return.

Zone 3 members seemed to have the best year. There closeness to the population centers helped them what with the consumer wanting to use there RV but worried about the price of fuel. It just made sense for them to camp closer to home. Also being closer to the state line and bringing in Ohio, Indiana & Illinois campers helped as these states seem to have turned there economies around and seem to be accepting the fuel prices.

Zone 2 there was a real split in this area with the west side getting the better side of the split. Many of the members I talked with and visited on the west side said they were flat or slightly up for the summer but it had been a roller coaster up one month and down the next. The east side of northern Michigan did not do as well most everyone I talked to said things were flat or down many of them reporting to me things were slow. It seems that the west side of Michigan may be ahead of the east side in the economies recovery.

Zone 1 I heard no good news from the UP at all. It seems they have been struggling for several years and this was the worst year yet. I do see some good news for our members in the UP what with fuel prices coming down and the fall color season coming up. RV'ers will want to use those rigs and what would be more beautiful than a long weekend in the UP.

A couple of trends that I heard this summer. Many of the members reported that early arrival and extended stay were the norm this summer. Campers seemed to make their reservations to come in on Thursday and depart on Monday. This is something that all of us have been trying to improve in our parks but it seemed this year we traded that longer stay for fewer reservations on the weekend. Every weekend this summer there were vacancies reported in all areas of the state. Many of the parks reported above normal ancillary income, Store sales, Rental equipment, Snack bar, Mini golf & Golf cart rentals were all strong just to mention a few. The last trend has to do with how far campers are traveling from home. It seemed in the past that folks were willing to travel about as far away from home as a tank of gas would take them filling there tank before they leave to head home. This year it seems they only want to use one tank of gas total for the whole trip. So in the Past where we may have had a 200-mile radius around our parks that radius has been brought in to 100 miles. This may explains why Zone 3 parks had a better year than the rest of us.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS POSTIONS AVAILABLE

One of the functions at the Fall Convention will be to elect the ARVC Michigan Board of Directors. Have you given thought to possible serving your association in this capacity? Here is an opportunity to serve not only your Association but also the Camping Industry. The ARVC Michigan Board of Directors are a working board that is always concerned about the welfare of the general membership. Each board member will serve on at least one committee and is accountable to the membership for their area of responsibility. You must be willing to devote the time that will be required to attend ten board meetings scheduled each year and to accomplish your obligations and responsibilities of your committee.

You do not have to be a "long-term" campground owner to be an effective contributor on the board. Nor do you have to be the owner of a large campground. In fact it is advantageous that the board be constituted of owners of various size campgrounds located throughout the state.

Remember, it does take time and commitment to make ARVC Michigan an even better Association. Enthusiasm and desire also help. A Sense of humor is no detriment!

Why not consider running for the board and contribute to your Association and learn about the Camping Industry at the same time. If you have any questions or would like to have your name added to the ballot call the ARVC Michigan office at 989-826-5255

GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

Single Business Tax Will See Early End

The Michigan Legislature stayed busy this summer. One of their accomplishments was to pass an early phase out of the Single Business Tax. The tax, seen as burdensome to business by many, has been gradually phasing out since 1999. The tax was fixed to sunset at the end of 2009. Instead the legislature voted to move the date earlier and end the tax on December 31, 2007.

Even as there is rejoicing with the end of the SBT, there is concern regarding what will replace the approximately \$2 billion in lost revenue. At the current time there are a number of proposals that are being considered. One plan includes a tax on services, obviously impacting the campground industry. At this point in time there don't seem to be any propositions that have become a favorite of the current legislature. It is expected that more in depth discussion will be heard in the coming months. ARVC Michigan will continue to keep members updated on this important issue.

Boat Livery Liability Reduction Bill A Success

House Bill 4778 introduced by Representative David Palsrok of Manistee was signed into law in June. The law protects an owner of a non-motorized boat livery from liability for injury or death to a user of the boat if the accident occurred as a direct result of inherent risk. The owner of the livery must post a sign stating that the person renting the boat accepts the risks inherent with the activity. Inherent risk includes but is not limited to waves, weather conditions, maneuvers necessary to avoid contact with another object, malfunction of the renters' personal equipment, failure to wear a personal flotation device, and overloading the boat.

Minimum Wage Hike Changes Possible for Young Workers

The increase of the minimum wage in Michigan came as an unwelcome surprise for many small business owners. The current legislation raises the wage from \$5.15 to \$6.95 an hour beginning October 1, 2006. Two more increases come in July of 2007 and 2008 where the wage will rise to \$7.15 and finally \$7.40 per hour.

Some recent changes in legislation have changed the minimum wage for younger workers. If approved by the governor, the new requirement would allow an employer to pay a new worker that is less than 20 years old a training wage of \$4.25 an hour for the first 90 days of employment. Also an employee that is less than 18 years old could be paid 85% of the current minimum.

Pending final approval dates to have on your calendar for the next couple years are as follows:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Minimum Wage</u>	<u>Employee Under 18</u>
October 1, 2006	\$6.95	\$5.91
July 1, 2007	\$7.15	\$6.08
July 1, 2008	\$7.40	\$6.29

Thank You!

I want to thank ARVC Michigan and the many members that sent e-mails, cards, thoughts, and prayers after my mom's passing in August. It is an honor to work for a group of people who care so much. It was a very challenging summer for me and my family as I'm sure you all understand better than anyone. I look forward to seeing you again at the Fall Convention and catching up.

Respectfully Submitted

Christina Lawrence