

## MARCH/NEWS

**MARCH 1****Man wanted for rape found**

TRAVERSE CITY — A Traverse City man wanted for a brutal rape committed two years ago was arrested Friday morning in Florida and will be returned for prosecution, said police.

Harry John Dobek III, 28, was taken into custody by officers in Lee County, Fla., after living as a fugitive since 2000, when he fled charges of first-degree criminal sexual conduct. Traverse City police believe he dragged a 25-year-old woman into a wooded area near Woodmere and Hannah the night of Oct. 28, 2000, then punched her in the face, forcibly removed her clothes and raped her.

Dobek, a former reptile salesman, has a previous conviction for larceny in a building after he stole an estimated \$1,200 worth of lizards, exotic turtles and poisonous snakes from an East Bay Township reptile dealer.

**MARCH 2****'Bounty hunters' sought**

TRAVERSE CITY — Local governments could increase tax revenues by hundreds of thousands of dollars by hiring personal property auditing firms that some business groups say are no better than "bounty hunters."

Grand Traverse county officials are negotiating with a North Carolina company to conduct more than 1,100 personal property audits on businesses worth \$50,000 or more over the next three years.

Tax Management Associates, which has worked for more than 200 local taxing units across the country, estimates that more than \$3.8 million in additional property tax revenue could be raised within the county by auditing the personal property statements of local businesses.

**MARCH 2****Conservancies prosper**

TRAVERSE CITY — While many nonprofit organizations reported a marked decrease



Record-Eagle file photo/Elizabeth Conley

**Kelly Merchand and Mike Malmborg tie the knot at the Wexford Civic Arena.**

in donations last year, just the opposite held true for northern Michigan land conservancies.

"Even with the tough economy, we had a record year last year," said Glen Chown, executive director of the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy. "We preserved more land than ever before."

Chown said supporters of his organization raised enough funding in 2002 to protect 2,325 acres of land in Grand Traverse, Antrim, Benzie, Manistee and Kalkaska counties. That included key tracts of farmland, watersheds, strategically targeted wildlife corridors and nearly four miles of shoreline along the area's lakes, rivers and streams.

The regional conservancy effort has now permanently protected 14,560 acres, including nearly 40 miles of shoreline, since the organization was started through a \$100,000 grant from Rotary Charities in 1991, Chown said.

**MARCH 3****Couple says 'I do' at rink**

CADILLAC — When Kelly Merchand and Mike Malmborg

faced off at center ice at the Wexford Civic Arena Saturday night, the pair exchanged wedding vows rather than blows for control of a hockey puck.

Sporting hockey jerseys made to look like wedding garb — a jersey with a screen printed tuxedo for him, one tailored to flow to the ground for her — the couple were married amid friends, family and teammates from their league hockey teams.

"This is our second family," Merchand said. "We just wanted something unique."

Tom Gray, a supervisor at the Wex who became the couple's wedding planner, said there's never been a wedding at the Cadillac rink before and he's never heard of one on a rink anywhere.

**MARCH 4****Arctic air closes schools**

TRAVERSE CITY — Arctic temperatures shut down or delayed the start of many northern Michigan schools Monday, but even a thermometer reading of 34 below zero wasn't frigid enough to cancel classes in Pellston.

What would you expect in

city that boasts of being the nation's cold spot, where the school district's Web address is [www.icebox.k12.mi.us](http://www.icebox.k12.mi.us)?

Superintendent William Tebbe said classes were held as planned without delays, and he reported no problems with the buildings.

In Traverse City, temperatures fell to 16 below zero at the airport. Traverse City Area Public Schools originally called for a two-hour delay but later decided to close school all day.

**MARCH 4****TC eyes wetlands law**

TRAVERSE CITY — The city took the first step Monday toward implementing its own wetlands ordinance.

The city commission approved undertaking an inventory of wetland properties within the city not already covered under state environmental regulations.

Such a study is required before local municipalities can adopt their own wetland regulations.

The city will hire Environmental Consultants & Services Inc. of Traverse City to complete the \$1,000 study,

which city manager Richard Lewis said should take about a month to complete.

The report will identify wetland areas in the city which are not already regulated by either state or federal environmental laws, which officials said will help them determine whether additional regulations are needed to protect environmentally sensitive areas around town.

**MARCH 5****Band, resort deal near**

ACME — After a few unsuccessful attempts the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians is finally closing in on a deal to buy the Grand Traverse Resort and Spa, sources familiar with the situation say.

The band is expected to announce at a 10 a.m. news conference today its intention to buy the multimillion-dollar resort from KSL Recreation Inc. of LaQuinta, Calif., according to sources familiar with the deal who asked to remain anonymous.

No details were available about price, how resort management and its 600-1,000 staff might be affected, or what plans the band has for any further development of the resort.

Band spokesman Luke Haase refused to comment about today's press conference in Peshawbestown, noting only in a written statement that band leaders will make a "major announcement."

Resort manager Paul McCormick could not be reached for comment.

**MARCH 5****Council OKs rezoning**

CADILLAC — Rezoning to bring a new Firstbank branch into downtown Cadillac was approved Monday by the city council.

The land, including 40 feet of frontage on Pine Street just west of Mitchell Street, has been rezoned from a combination of business and residential to all business, according to Dale Walker, assistant city manager.

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