It’s reunion time!
Welcome back, alumni

Professor Rolf Peterson retires from teaching

Alumni tell success stories

Michigan Tech

Photo from Isle Royale wolf study collection.
Dear alumni and friends,

“We measure our success by the success of our students.”

This ethic is infused in everything we do at Michigan Tech and the School of Forest Resources and Environmental Science, but what does it actually mean?

My own experience was as a shy girl from Missouri who, by chance, “found” Michigan Tech six years after graduating from high school. I came here because of the forestry program, but I also came to Tech because of the local community, the forested landscape, and the friendliness of the people. I quickly learned that Tech truly is a jewel. It is where I learned to be more independent, expanded my knowledge, and gained many skills. I am a lifelong learner because of my initial experiences at Tech.

Likewise, we have over 2,900 alumni and friends who have benefited and grown because of the School. Although many of you may not be practicing foresters, ecologists, wood scientists, or wildlife biologists, I know in some respect you have had—and continue to have—many “successes.” I hope you attribute them in part to Michigan Tech and the School.

We hope you enjoy the new look of our newsletter. In this issue, we have captured some of the many successes of our alumni and what they are doing with their lives. These are personal views of the various paths taken by graduates after leaving Michigan Tech. Their “success” is not that they ended up in a certain field, but that they followed and achieved their dreams. We also included what some faculty, staff, and students have done this year—a small sampling of our successes, which all contribute to a School of distinction.

We had some major changes this year with the retirements of Gail Weisinger from her position as staff assistant at the Ford Forestry Center and Rolf Peterson as a professor. (He will no longer teach, but will continue as a research professor.) Next fall we will welcome two new wildlife faculty: John Vucetich and Jackie Grant. And, as always, we will see new students come in (and graduate) and begin to create their future.

The School is a wonderful community of scholars and creative individuals—students, staff, faculty, alumni, and friends. I wish you all the best for the future and many successes. I would love to hear from you about where your life’s path has taken you. I also hope I see some of you at reunion or in my travels.

Margaret (Peg) R. Gale

An alumnus recently called to ask when reunion was scheduled and what was being planned (see details on page 4). He was starting to get his summer schedule together and contemplating a trip to the Upper Peninsula.

I had a great conversation with him, well, mostly. This graduate and I talked about the old days. The days when Marty Jurgensen was his soils professor, and the days when Peg Gale and Glenn Mroz were brand-new faculty. I assured him that Marty was still busy cranking out inspired soil scientists and that Peg and Glenn were taking care of the place in their respective positions as dean of the School of Forest Resources and Environmental Science and president of the University. We talked about the day when a long list of now-retired faculty—all male—taught us to be foresters. We laughed about how young everyone was way back then, how long ago that was, and how things have changed.

It was great fun reminiscing with him. But then he mentioned that I was his dendro TA.

What? Me too? I’m part of the group that is now considered used to be young? The conversation was no longer quite as amusing.

Yes, it has been twenty-plus years since I was a dendro teaching assistant. I loved that class. I loved it so much, I took it twice. It was better the second time. But that’s another story.

What is it about twenty years that makes it the magic number? Well, that is about the time it takes for most people to get nostalgic. And twenty-five is about the time they’re ready to act on it.

For this reason, the School has centered its reunion festivities on those celebrating their twenty-fifth reunion, as well as those celebrating their fiftieth. Although planning is focused on those classes, reunion is not just for them—it’s for everyone. One of the great things about this place is the friendships that cross over class years. So grab your old yearbook, call an old friend, and trek back to Tech August 3–5.

Let me know if I can help!

—Carrie Richards
Justin Miller, class of 2000, tends to business

Consulting forestry has intrigued Justin Miller since he was a student. After graduating in 2000, he worked for industry and for the federal government. He says both were good experiences but not exactly what he was looking for. Then he had the opportunity to work for a forestry consultant, and he realized this was his dream and his future.

Five years ago, the opportunity arose to manage a good-sized parcel for a private landowner, a job that he describes as “an overwhelming undertaking for me.” He worked through the challenge and attracted additional projects and clientele. Now he has his own company, Green Timber Consulting Foresters, Inc., located in Pelkie, Michigan. Green Timber is involved in a variety of forestry-based work across the Upper Peninsula, as well as other parts of the state and country.

During the first three years as a consultant, Justin worked solo. Then he was able to expand the business and add staff. He currently employs three Michigan Tech foresters: Rexx Janowiak (‘02), Jim Pelkola (‘99, MS ‘01) and Michelle (Niemela) Miller (‘02). He also hires a part-time seasonal technician, a position that he has consistently filled with a Tech student. Miller says, “Being so close to Tech, I haven’t had to travel far to find the caliber of foresters that we need in this business. Overall, I’ve been very impressed with the knowledge that the forestry students and graduates have shown.”

The business has entailed long hours, demanding physical labor, the everyday worries of owning a business. “Our diverse skills and services keep us up to speed with current trends and offer security for our future. I plan to continue this work and expand my knowledge for years to come. There will always be a need for responsible and educated forest management. As a consulting forester, I am committed to managing our forests in a healthy, sustainable fashion to the best of my abilities.”

Ford and Boss clear the way for expanded programming at the Ford Center

By Stacy Cotey, Director of Outreach

Recent donations by the Ford Motor Company and Boss Snowplow will provide year-round access to the Ford Center’s historic town site. Ford Motor Company provided an F-250 King Ranch truck for the maintenance of Alberta. Boss Snowplow, a division of Northern Star Industries Inc., donated a Power V Plow that attaches to the F-250. The truck and snowplow combined will handle the more than 150 inches of snow that the Center receives each year.

Part of the School of Forest Resources and Environmental Science’s strategic plan for the Ford Center is to expand school programs and public outreach. The new truck and plow will allow the School to use the Center’s resources more easily in the winter months. Better accessibility will enhance the Ford Center’s reputation as a sustainable forest resources and environmental research facility that provides hands-on quality education for our students and the public. Thanks to Ford Motor Company and Northern Star Industries, the School will be one step closer to accomplishing this mission.

Thanks also to Dan Kapp and Ken Leisenring of Ford Motor Company; Dave Brule, Charles Hughett, and Jody Christy of Northern Star Industries; and Steven Stackhouse of MTU Corporate Services for making these donations possible.

The School is always looking for new ways to partner with individuals or companies. If you have an idea or opportunity, please contact Stacy Cotey, Director of Outreach at 906-487-2417 or srcotey@mtu.edu

Alumni news: Keeping connected

Continued on page 4

1963 Tom Piehl was married in November 2005 in Duluth, Georgia, to the former Phyllis Alder. Tom had his son stand as his best man; his two daughters and grandson also were in the wedding party. A “treat” for Tom was to have his cousin Ken and Marian Maki, as well as Dick and Mary Meier, come down from Wisconsin to attend. Dick served as a deacon. Both Ken and Dick are also ’63 alumni.

1971 Fred Krueger is on the public service staff at Portage Health in Hancock, Michigan. He provides leadership for recreation, lands, minerals, and engineering for the forest.

1978 Karin Van Dyke has been promoted to vice president of communications at Portage Health in Hancock, Michigan. She oversees the community relations, education, and human resources departments.

1996 Ben Travis is serving in Iraq with his National Guard unit from Gladstone, Michigan. He looks forward to returning to work as a wildlife technician for the Michigan DNR.

2000 Melinda (Jones) Vokoun graduated from Virginia Tech in May 2005 with a PhD in Forest Economics. She will be published soon in the Journal of Forest Economics. Melinda and her husband, James Vokoun (’00), relocated to Raleigh, North Carolina. Melinda will work for North Carolina State University as a postdoctoral research associate in the Department of Forestry. Melinda and James welcomed their firstborn in
Awards and recognitions

Achievements

Congratulations to Linda Nagel, Chung-Jui Tsai, Blair Orr, and Scott Harding! At its April meeting, the Michigan Tech Board of Control awarded tenure to Linda as well as promotion to associate professor; promoted Chung-Jui and Blair to full professor; and promoted Scott to research associate professor.

Welcome new faculty and staff

John Vucetich and Jackie Grant each accepted a position as assistant professor of wildlife ecology, and Kari Price is the new on-site manager/program coordinator at the Ford Center in Alberta.

Newest PCA member

Dean Peg Gale has been elected to Michigan Tech’s Presidential Council of Alumni. PCA members are recognized for achievement in education, their profession, past service as a student, community service, support for the University, and personal achievements. The PCA advises the University president on campus-climate issues and provides suggestions for enhancing the environment for students, both women and men.

Recent funding

Associate Professor Linda Nagel received $5,000 from the US Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, Seney National Wildlife Refuge, for “Assessment of Control Methods for Glossy Buckthorn.”

Professor Kurt Pregitzer received $400,000 for the first year of a potential $1-million project from the US Department of Energy for the Midwestern Regional Center of the National Institute for Climatic Change Research.

Dean Peg Gale, in partnership with Ann Mayo Kiely from the Isle Royale Institute and the National Park Service, has received a three-year grant of $40,000 from the DeVlieg Foundation to inventory existing research at the park and to develop a strategic research plan.

Associate Professor Andrew Storer received $367,568 from the US Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry, for “2006 Michigan and Northern Wisconsin Emerald Ash Borer Detection Survey.”

In the news

The work of Research Assistant Professor John Vucetich was featured in USA Today. Dan Vergano’s article on “What’s Killing the Elk in Yellowstone?” includes Vucetich’s analysis, which points the finger primarily at hunting and drought as the elk herd’s primary enemies. Read the entire article at www.forest.mtu.edu/news.

Alumni Reunion 2006!

Make your plans to trek to Tech –

It’s no coincidence that the “best week of the summer” is also the week of Michigan Tech’s annual alumni reunion. The School of Forest Resources and Environmental Science is always excited to welcome back our graduates and friends in early August. Here’s what we have planned.

The fifth annual Chili Challenge Cook-off, scheduled for the afternoon of August 4, is a great place to meet old classmates and make new friends. The event is tentatively planned for the atrium of Hesterberg Hall. Watch your alumni mailings for more details or check the Web.

On Saturday, August 5, the School will hold a luncheon for all of our graduates at the Dreamland Restaurant in Bootjack. We will be honoring the classes of 1981 and 1956, who will be celebrating their 25th and 50th reunions, respectively. We will also have our Honor Academy induction and present the 2006 Outstanding Alumnus Award.

We hope you can attend. For more information on the School’s reunion activities, see www.forest.mtu.edu/alumni/reunion. For more information on the University’s reunion activities, see www.admin.mtu.edu/alumni/reunion.
**Faculty focus:**

**Professor Rolf Peterson retires**

Rolf Peterson has had a storied career at Michigan Tech teaching as well as directing the world’s longest wildlife study. Rolf is retiring—the professorship may be over, but the research continues.

Although Rolf will no longer be teaching, he will remain as a research professor and continue to help conduct wolf-moose studies on Isle Royale. The work has been a good fit for him because fieldwork has always been one of his priorities—and it is what he has been doing for the past thirty years.

A native of Minneapolis, Minnesota, Rolf enjoyed seasonal escapes from the urban setting in his youth through various camps of the YMCA, which offered such adventures as canoe trips into the wilds of Canada. Rolf learned later that Durwood Allen, who would become his advisor and mentor, had enjoyed similar interests in his youth. Allen looked favorably on this common background when considering Rolf’s admission to graduate school at Purdue University.

Rolf earned a Bachelor’s Degree in Zoology from the University of Minnesota-Duluth and went to Purdue to earn his PhD in Wildlife Ecology in 1974. He spent one year at Purdue as a research associate before starting his career as an assistant professor in the biological sciences department at Michigan Tech. In 1983 he was promoted to associate professor, and in 1987, he transferred to the School of Forestry and Wood Products, as the unit was known then, when the University shifted wildlife-related studies from biology to forestry. The change was accompanied by Rolf’s promotion to professor of wildlife ecology.

Rolf is best known for the wolf-moose study on Isle Royale, now in its forty-eighth year. When Rolf joined the study in 1971, he realized that he wanted to—needed to—be in the field. Entrusting all the fieldwork to graduate students, for instance, resulted in uneven data. Rolf found that the moose population dropped every time a new student took over, and then increased as the student became more accustomed to counting moose from the air. His presence improved the consistency of the data. Thirty-five years later, he’s still in the field, spending every summer on the island. He has always been accompanied by his wife, Candy Peterson, and the two of them rough it in a small cabin without running water or electricity.

But Rolf had to start somewhere too. Don Murray, the pilot who flew the study plane from 1959 to 1979, took a liking to Rolf back in the year of his first winter study. He liked that Rolf was honest about his lack of experience and his interest in learning to read tracks the way Don could. In 1979, Don Glaser took over as pilot and continues to fly the study plane each January and February for a seven-week period.

Many articles can be found on the Internet about Rolf’s research projects, but not much is found about Rolf himself. His commitment to his work is complemented by his manner of dealing with people. One friend says, “He is humble and gets along with everybody, and these are valuable traits to have when you really care about your work.”

Rolf’s retirement was celebrated at the School in March. Friends, family, and colleagues gathered to reminisce and wish Rolf and Candy well in the next phase of his career. You can learn more about Rolf’s work at [www.isleroyalewolf.org](http://www.isleroyalewolf.org).
In the classroom: Udall scholarship

Marcy Erickson, who is majoring in applied ecology and environmental sciences, recently received a Morris K. Udall undergraduate scholarship. Erickson is the third Michigan Tech student in as many years to be named a Udall Scholar. The scholarship will help support Erickson during her senior year at the University.

Every year, the Morris K. Udall Foundation awards $5,000 merit scholarships to sophomores and juniors. The students must have demonstrated a commitment to careers related to the environment or to tribal policies and health care. This year, the foundation awarded 80 scholarships to students from among 445 nominees nationwide.

In the field: urban tree care

Professor David Karnosky and his team of urban forestry students recently attended the Midwest Urban Tree Care Forum in the greater Chicago area. “It was a very worthwhile trip,” Karnosky says, “and it was a great chance for our students to meet prospective employers in the booming field of arboriculture.”

The spring 2006 forum attracted more than seventy students and faculty from six universities, and it featured stops at the Chicago Botanical Garden, the Ravinia Festival Center, Crane’s Landing Golf Course, Mundelein Seminary, and several locations in the northern suburbs to examine various tree-care issues, as well as restoration of forests impacted by invasive species.

The final afternoon featured hands-on tree planting, pruning, and climbing at the Lincolnshire Marriott Resort. “Getting the opportunity to learn the latest tree climbing rope techniques and then to try them ourselves was awesome,” said Tech sophomore John Bauer.

Alumnus sets sail

Ken Holmes, ’54, doesn’t regret choosing a career as a forester. “Fourteen hour work days were a pleasure being in the forest and a part of the lumber industry,” he said. But, after an active and rewarding twenty-four-year career with the State of Idaho’s Forestry Department, as well as other positions in the forest resources industry, Ken decided it was time to broaden his personal horizons.

So, in 1978, Ken “retired,” and he and a companion sailed around the world. The duo plied the world’s oceans in a thirty-seven-foot cutter of wood construction. The odyssey took more than six years and covered 52,315 nautical miles.

After that venture, Ken was a landlubber for a year, during which he traveled around the country. Then, in 1986, the seas beckoned again, and he and companion, Greta Elmgren, embarked on his second circumnavigation of the globe. That adventure took more than eight years and covered 30,000 nautical miles.

Ken learned to sail in Alaska on an eighteen-foot sailboat. “It was not much preparation,” Ken says of his endeavors. He and his partner learned as they went, had no sending radio, and used only a sextant to guide their travels. Only once was there serious trouble. The boat suffered a “knockdown”—it tipped ninety degrees, the mast touched the water, and the sea smashed the house. After covering the hole and bailing, Ken decided, based on conditions, to sail back eight hundred miles to the Azores, half the distance to Ireland, instead of continuing on. It proved to be a good decision.

Ken’s interests in sailing were not in seeing great landmarks or tourist attractions, but rather in seeing and learning about other people and their cultures—to understand how others lived. Ken managed these sojourns by “living cheaply,” but he remembers them as living richly—being with new people, sailing a thousand miles offshore, reaching remote locations—as well as taking in the water, the sky, and the stars. “Those are the things,” he says, “that made it all worthwhile.”

Ken and Greta are now retired from sailing, but they will remember the experience forever. “With 16 years of sailing offshore, I completed the building of my self-worth,” Ken said. He has written poetry (his first while at Michigan Tech), an autobiography, and some children's stories, and has carved a few wooden heads while occasionally going to art classes.

Reflecting on both his forestry career and nautical adventures at the age of 76, Ken says he “has little need to feel disappointed with the whole of life.”
**Spring banquet**

The School’s annual banquet was held in early April, and it honored our seniors, alumni, and friends. Senior Molly Cypher, who is the chair of the student chapter of the Society of American Foresters/Forestry Club, emceed the event.

Two Outstanding Senior Awards were presented, representing forestry as well as applied ecology and environmental sciences. Dean Peg Gale commented, “I look forward to the day when we have a student graduating from our wildlife ecology and management program, and we can honor three seniors.” This year’s awards went to Adam Gahagan (forestry) and Emily Grosvenor (applied ecology and environmental sciences).

Adam Gahagan, from Frankenmuth, Michigan, graduated with a 3.78 GPA. In addition to academics, Adam worked on the FACE project and for the US Forest Service lab in Houghton for the last three years. He also was an important part of developing the Nara Nature Park, a project spearheaded by Tech’s Forest Environmental Research Management team. Outside of class and work, Adam is an avid broomball player. He will remain at Tech to pursue a master’s degree and will study the effects of tree species on carbon sequestration in forest ecosystems.

Emily Grosvenor, from Crystal Falls, Michigan, was originally a biology major, but switched to applied ecology and environmental sciences in her freshman year. Emily’s name often appeared on the dean’s list. She is an active member of Xi Sigma Pi, serving as the fiscal agent this year. Emily volunteers at St. Al’s parish and was the coordinator of the senior gift project. Dean Gale said, “Emily’s energy and enthusiasm can be felt in all she does.”

Xi Sigma Pi, the School's honor fraternity, made presentations to Associate Professor Andrew Storer (2005–06 Distinguished Teaching Award); Instructor Michael Hyslop (Distinguished Staff Award); and Graduate Student Rita Koch (Graduate Student Teaching Award). Janet Bandeff, forester for Xi Sigma Pi, made the presentations.

Several student awards were presented for outstanding work during the academic year. Assistant Professor Chris Webster presented two Capstone Awards. Best Forest Management Plan was presented to the team of John Codere, Adam Gahagan, Patrick Marolla, Erik Sjoquist, and Matt Tormohlen. The team of Janet Bandeff, Susan Brown, Emily Doty, Kim Erickson, and Marie Prescott was presented with the Best Integrated Resource Assessment. Their report will be submitted in the regional Capstone competition.

Visiting Assistant Professor Rod Chimner presented Wetland Assessment awards to Janet Bandeff, Emily Grosvenor, and Stacie Holmes for their work on the Sandpiper Drive Wetland and to Patrick Marolla, Brian Hunter, and Nathan Eiting for their assessment of the Atlantic Mine Swamp.

**Weisinger retires**

Gail Weisinger retired after working at Michigan Tech’s Ford Forestry Center in Alberta since March of 1992. While managing the present Wetland for their work on the Sandpiper Drive Swamp.

She is originally from Coverdale, Minnesota, and graduated from Michigan Tech with a 3.78 GPA. In addition to academics, she worked on the FACE project and for the US Forest Service lab in Houghton for the last three years. She also was an important part of developing the Nara Nature Park, a project spearheaded by Tech’s Forest Environmental Research Management team. Outside of class and work, she is an avid broomball player. She will remain at Tech to pursue a master’s degree and will study the effects of tree species on carbon sequestration in forest ecosystems.

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**Weisinger retires**

Gail Weisinger retired after working at Michigan Tech’s Ford Forestry Center in Alberta since March of 1992. While managing the administrative office, Gail helped coordinate several important events at the facility, including the Historic Ford Sawmill dedication and the harvesting of the State of Michigan Christmas Tree in 1998.

“I’ve really enjoyed working with many people,” she said. The list of agencies with which she has worked include the USDA, the Michigan DNR, and the MCCC—not to mention MTU personnel. “Everyone at Michigan Tech has been so helpful and nice to work with. And I have met so many great people from all over. I have enjoyed working with them too and getting to be friends. I will miss them all.”

As for retirement, Gail says, “Well, I don’t plan to sleep in!” She has many unfinished projects on hold and she and her husband, Russ, plan to do some traveling and spend more time at their camp on Huron Bay—as well as more time with their twelve grandchildren. She also looks forward to gardening, reading, and quilting. “There is just so much to do. I look forward to it all.”
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Calendar of Events—2006

MTU Alumni Reunion
August 3-5

SFRES Reunion Events
• Dean’s Chili Challenge Cook-off—August 4
• All-class lunch (honoring the classes of 1956 and 1981), Dreamland Restaurant, Bootjack—August 5

Fall classes resume
September 5

SAF National Convention,
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
October 25-29