

## On the air under water — Bloomfield Township biologist is part of Cousteau TV special

By Pat Murphy, Staff Writer

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Elliott Smith watches television selectively.

The marine biologist from Bloomfield will be watching Wednesday, however, when a PBS special focuses on the Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary in Alpena.

Smith is part of the sea cadet contingent that provided support for Jean-Michel Cousteau and his crew as they filmed "America's Underwater Treasures," a special about the country's 13 National Marine Sanctuaries.



Elliott Smith, a marine biologist from Bloomfield Township (left), and Luke Clyburn, commander of the Sea Cadets, confer with Jean-Michel Cousteau at the Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary and Underwater Preserve off Alpena, Michigan.

"That was a wonderful learning experience," Smith said, referring to last October when he, the cadets and their officers worked closely with the son of the late Jacques-Yves Cousteau.

"Cousteau went out of his way to talk about conservation and marine ecology," said Smith, a marine consultant who also teaches at Oakland University.

Over three days last October, Cousteau and his crew explored and filmed the remains of the *John J. Audubon* and the *Defiance*, two ships that collided and sank in 1854.

Smith said working with Cousteau's crew enabled cadets - and him - to work with real professionals to learn, among other things, advanced dive technology systems.

"We worked from the *Pride of Michigan* (the 80-foot former Navy vessel operated by the cadets)," Smith said. Besides running the ship, cadets worked with Cousteau's crew operating from its research boat, *Man-Fish*.

Smith and the cadets are part of the second, two-hour segment of the PBS special. The first segment of the special was broadcast last week.

The cadets and Luke Clyburn, commander of the U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps for 34 years, haven't seen the film. But Clyburn and others have seen the video preview on

the Ocean Adventures Website for Jean-Michel Cousteau, narrated by Robert Redford.

"I thought we (the cadets) might be a gray ship on the horizon," said Clyburn, who owns a real estate appraisal service from his home in White Lake Township.

"But we get pretty good play," Clyburn said.

The video features footage of the *Pride* and its crew, and Redford refers to the cadet program as "training future explorers."

"Clyburn estimates that as many as 1,000 cadets been part of the program, with some going on to the University of Michigan, the Naval Academy and other colleges. "They are future leaders," he said, "and their exposure to the Great Lakes will help preserve that great resource."

"The cadet program was centered in Southfield, at the old Navy Reserve Center on Eleven Mile, west of Telegraph, from 1973 to 1988, when it was moved to its present base at the mouth of the Clinton River in Macomb County."

At its core, the cadet program focuses on basic naval skills. Cadets, for example, undergo two weeks of Navy boot camp at the Great Lakes Training Center. They also take dive training under the direction of Clyburn and other certified instructors.

"It's more than scuba diving," said Lt. Kathy Trax, a certified dive instructor. "We open doors of awareness about the Great Lakes through science and exploration," said Trax, who graduated from Southfield High School in 1971, when her last name was Stuart.

Among other projects, the cadets have been involved in researching zebra mussels in northern Lake Michigan, drowned forests in Lake Huron and the search for underwater chert pits in Traverse Bay. Chert pits are ancient sites where Native Americans dug stones to form into arrowheads.

Smith, Clyburn, Trax and others in the cadet program have been invited to Alpena and the Great Lakes Maritime Heritage Center to watch the PBS special. "That's one of the few times I'll make a point of watching television," said marine biologist Smith.

School, the timing and other obligations won't allow the other nine cadets who worked with the Cousteau crew to go to Alpena for the showing.

"But I think they will be watching (Wednesday)," said cadet Nathan Dembeck, a senior at Warren Woods Tower High School. "I know I will," he said.

Dembeck said he'll be working on a homecoming float with classmates that evening. "But you can bet I'll find a television set when the special is on," he said.

## **Thunder Bay is nation's only freshwater preserve**

*By Pat Murphy, Staff Writer*

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The Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary and Underwater Preserve was dedicated in Alpena in September 2005, becoming the nation's 13th underwater park and its only freshwater preserve. The 448-square mile park is part of an area known for a century as Shipwreck Alley, because of the unpredictable weather, murky fog bands, sudden gales and rocky shoals. An estimated 160 shipwrecks are recorded in the area, many of which have not been found. Other national marine preserves are: the Monitor National Marine Sanctuary, named after the Civil War ironclad ship, off the coast of North Carolina; the Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary off the coast of Georgia; the Gerry E. Studds Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary near Massachusetts Bay; the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary; the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary in the Gulf of Mexico; the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary off the Olympic Peninsula in Washington; the Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary, the Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary, the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, and the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary, all off the coast of California; the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary; the Fagatele Bay National Marine Sanctuary in American Samoa. Another area, the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve, has been proposed as the 14th National Marine Sanctuary.

Visit these websites for more information about:

The National Marine Sanctuaries, <http://www.sanctuaries.nos.noaa.gov/>

Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary, <http://thunderbay.noaa.gov/>

Jean-Michel Cousteau's Ocean Futures Society, <http://www.oceanfutures.org/>

The Great Lakes Division of Sea Cadets, <http://www.greatlakesdivision.org/>

The Noble Odyssey Foundation, <http://www.nof.homestead.com/>