

## Lake Huron Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee

Established by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to improve and maintain fishery resources of Lake Huron through better communication and partnership.

**Lake Huron Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee**  
**Jay's Sporting Goods, Inc., Clare, Michigan**  
**Wednesday, October 12, 2016**  
**Approved**

### **Attendees:**

Tony Aderman, Jim Baker, Dave Borgeson, Jerry Brown, Doreen Campbell, Lance Campbell, Randy Claramunt, Bryan Darland, Jim De Clerck, Larry DesLoover, Jim Dexter, Tony Duffiney, Clarence Fetson, Dave Fielder, Ken Glupker, Tom Goniea, Todd Grischke, Dennis Gulau, Tom Hamilton, Ji He, Lindsey Henski, Matt Herbert, Jim Johnson, Rick Kretzschmar, Frank Krist, Scott Lutz, Ken Merckel, Craig Milkowski, Judy Ogden, Alan Seiferlein, Dana Serafin, Jerry Serafin, Julie Shafto, Steve Shafto, Fred Sterns, Randy Terrian, Tyler Williams, Ralph Zimmermann

### **Welcome and Introductions:**

Frank Krist called the meeting to order and welcomed Randy Claramunt, new Lake Huron Basin Coordinator. Frank also recognized Todd Grischke, Assistant Chief, for his prior role on the committee. Attendees introduced themselves.

### **A Fishery Management Vision for Lake Huron (Randy Claramunt, DNR Lake Huron Basin Coordinator):**

Randy began by providing his background before moving into the Lake Huron Basin Coordinator role. Randy is from Frankenmuth Michigan and grew up fishing on Saginaw Bay. He completed his undergraduate work at Michigan State University. He interned with Russ Brown, working on smelt recruitment on Northern Lake Huron. He has also held positions with National Great Rivers Field Station in Illinois, and the Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa Indians. For the past 15 years, Randy has been working with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources in Fisheries Division, Research Section. Randy has a diverse background, working with state, federal and tribal agencies, on a variety of species, rivers, streams and Great Lakes issues.

A fishery management vision for Lake Huron is simply a way to begin a discussion. This Committee working with the Fisheries Division greatly helps shape management decisions. A fisheries approach to management contains three basic principles:

- A team concept
- Using the best available science
- Use a process of linking the science with decisions by communication, evaluation, and change

Some examples of this approach include; Whitefish Catch Policies, Reef Restoration, and Salmon Management:

Whitefish harvest in Lake Michigan is very important to tribal agencies and State anglers. There appeared to be a discrepancy between expected and actual yield. Tribal and state agencies worked together to set a constant catch policy. This has been in place for 10 years now, is not causing harm, and provides better management of the resources.

A reef restoration project was completed with a broad and diverse team. By sharing ideas and working together over 450 tons of rock were placed last August, with another 200 tons of rock placed this spring on a degraded spawning reef. Almost immediately, smallmouth bass and lake trout began to colonize the reef. Current data indicates that the spawning production of lake trout has increased 5 to 10 times since the restoration.

Fisheries approach to management has also been used to manage the Great Lakes salmon program since the decline of alewife. This has brought the science to the stakeholders and public and provided opportunities for all to furnish input.

Some future areas of focus for Lake Huron include:

- Review of the salmon and trout fishery
- Ongoing monitoring of the Atlantic Salmon Program
- Continued work with Saginaw Bay to improve the yellow perch fishery and better balance the walleye and prey populations including rehabilitation of cisco
- Utilize the food web approach
- Improve habitat in critical areas
- Deal with invasive species
- Develop a Lake Huron Management Plan

## **An Introduction to the Status and Potential Management Options of the Lake Huron Chinook Salmon Program (Randy Claramunt, DNR Lake Huron Basin Coordinator).**

Lake Michigan is currently undergoing Chinook salmon and other predator stocking reductions. Michigan will stock 300,000 Chinook salmon in Lake Michigan during 2017 (down 46 percent from 2016) and will discontinue federally stocked lake trout in Grand Haven, Holland and New Buffalo in 2018. **Note:** a change on October 21 specified that the number of Chinook salmon to be stocked in Lake Michigan by the MDNR will be 330,000 which is down 41% from 559,000 Chinook stocked in 2015, lake trout will be reduced by 270,000 and Coho will be reduced by 96,000

Historically, stocking in Lakes Huron and Michigan was linked but after 2004 stocking between the lakes was considered separately. There is renewed interest in reviewing both lakes together since there is movement of fish between the lakes.

In the past, the traditional public process to implement fishery policy changes included: consultation with the Great Lakes Fishery Commission Lake Technical Committees (biologists from all jurisdictions surrounding a lake) and the Lake Committees (high level fisheries managers from all jurisdictions). These committees would make a decision and then the plan would be shared with the public with little or no input. Often, the resulting outcome would be very contentious. That model was modified several years ago. The Department now follows a participation spectrum that greatly increases the public's ability to provide input, consult, and, collaborate. This process empowers stakeholders and others.

Regarding Lake Huron salmon management, the goal is to develop a process, not an individual action. There is a timeline, and the brainstorming for goals and objectives starts today. This is followed by scientific review, stakeholder review, Committee review, public meetings, technical planning and implementation by September of 2017. Throughout this entire process communication is critical. The goal is to develop a scientific based positive plan that has strong public support.

### **Questions and Discussion:**

**Comment:** Jim Dexter, Fisheries Chief, DNR – Conducting an annual review of both lakes, as discussed by Randy is a great idea. The traditional public process is very old school, and we have spent a tremendous amount of time sharing information and being transparent. As a member of this Committee, you have a duty to share and distribute these conversations and data. It is always best to have the support of the angling community. Anglers commented that the Department traditionally talked for years before taking action, and that we needed to act faster. Because of those concerns, a more streamlined decision making process was used to seek input from the public concerning the proposed Chinook salmon and other predator stocking cuts in Lake Michigan. The process moved too quickly to adequately inform and receive input from the stakeholders and public. As a result, there was undue contention recently in the angling world. So, we will need to step back and slow the process down again. The earlier Chinook salmon cuts in both Lake Michigan and Lake Huron were strongly supported by the public because of extensive exchanges of information between the stakeholders and public.

**Question:** Alan Seiferlein – A supporter of manmade reefs but what do these reefs mean for mussels? Will the mussels fill in and take over the reef?

**Response 1:** Randy Claramunt – All management action and habitat restoration has inherent risks. Are we creating a reef that just provides habitat for invasive species? In this instance, there are data to suggest that quality optimal habitat improves native smallmouth bass populations.

**Response 2:** Jim Johnson – The final reports for the reefs built in Thunder Bay are out. The mussels did not colonize the new reefs. It appears that the juvenile mussels are being eaten as quickly as they appear.

**Question:** Doreen Campbell – When the Department is allotted money for new reefs, does that include allocation of monies to maintain them? Or once they are built, are they on their own?

**Response:** Randy Claramunt – There are usually no funds provided for maintenance. Restoration or mitigation is a very small component of our budget. Most money for habitat improvement goes to dams, road crossings, etc. The Department is working to have future money allocated to reef restoration.

**Comment:** Randy Terrian – Randy believes it is a good idea to get together with Lake Michigan, but where Lake Michigan is right now is very different from where Lake Huron is, right now. Lake Michigan is following our trends and they can learn from us.

**Comment:** Tom Hamilton – Adjacent communities seem to operate similarly to rival football teams. Communities need to work together, and recognize that fish move around. A stocking in one community is not necessarily where the fish will be harvested.

**Comment:** Steve Shafto – Communicating and educating is very important. We need to reach new anglers, by learning their communication style.

**Question:** Dennis Gulau – After these meetings, it is a struggle to communicate the message back to local clubs. Could talking points or handouts be distributed?

**Response:** Jim Dexter – We need to ensure this information is transferred. Take the notes, take the handouts, and bring it to your local clubs.

**Response:** Randy Terrian: – If you struggle to communicate the ‘whys’ and ‘why not’s’ of the Department’s message, club members will crucify you. A picture is worth a thousand words. The presentations and talks are great; but hard to convey. Providing the presentations to the Advisors in an easy to understand form that can be taken back to the clubs would be very helpful.

**Comment:** Fred Sterns – Jim Johnson before he retired often attended club meetings and reported on Department initiatives; anglers expected that.

**Response:** Dave Fielder – It’s very difficult to attend all local club meetings. That is why the Department consolidated our presentations into annual Sea Grant workshops.

**Response:** Dave Borgeson – It is extremely challenging to reach everyone. Committee members must have a difficult time sharing the information to get club members up to speed. We recognize the difficulty and we need to work together to develop better materials to take back to home.

**Question:** Jim De Clerck – How do you combat the negative thoughts and comments at the bottom of online articles? Many individuals attempt to seek out information that only reinforces their points of view.

**Comment:** Ken Merckel – We had USFW, DNR, and GLFC and other agencies at club meetings. When you have club members that do not want to believe the research or the Department’s message does not support what they believe, some persons do not care and will not listen. You just do the best you can.

**Comment:** Doreen Campbell – An attitude that bugs her is that she hears repetitively from the public that most of the money is being spent on the other side of the state in Lake Michigan and no one plans to help Lake Huron. It is a hard attitude to beat.

**Response:** Randy Claramunt – Everyone has their own mode of communication whether it is meetings or via technology but none are wrong. You simply use it all. Get positive messages out there, and never engage an argument in the media. Simply get the message out repeatedly in as many venues as possible.

**Comment:** Judy Ogden –It would be beneficial to see fishery information from Ontario. For example, there is interest in knowing which fishing clubs are raising fish and how many are produced and stocked along with the return to creel of each species.

**Response:** Randy Claramunt – Yes we want to include Ontario data, Todd has a good understanding, but I have worked with them also. That data must be a piece of the puzzle. All salmon management options need to be considered.

**Comment:** Frank Krist – Lake Huron is being managed to keep alewives down while Lake Michigan is being managed to keep alewives going. There is a need to keep both lakes in mind but this Committee should focus on the management needs of Lake Huron with the goal of finding management options that benefit both lakes.

## **Status of the Cormorant Management Program, (Tony Duffiney and Tony Aderman, US Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services):**

In November, 1999, the US Fish and Wildlife Service published a notice in the Federal Register of its intention to prepare, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services (USDA/WS), a Double-crested Cormorant Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and National Management Plan to address the effects of cormorant population increases and range expansion. The US Fish and Wildlife Service finalized a regulation to implement the Public Resource Depredation Order (PRDO) in November, 2003. The regulation authorizes the take of double-crested cormorants, their eggs and nests, without a federal permit, by state fish and wildlife agencies, USDA/WS or their agents in 24 mid-continent states. Federally recognized tribes may also operate under the PRDO, but may carry out cormorant control only on reservation land or ceded lands within their jurisdiction.

In 2014, the US Fish and Wildlife Service extended the PRDO until 2019. However, in early 2016, a federal court ruled in favor of a lawsuit filed by Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER). The court found that the US Fish and Wildlife Service clearly violated the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) by not comprehensively documenting the need to control cormorants. Wildlife Services are working with the US Fish and Wildlife Service to obtain some form of cormorant management in place for Michigan during 2017 which will focus more on harassment and less on reducing the number of birds.

Currently, depredation permits are allowed for limited lethal control. USDA Wildlife Services has a meeting scheduled in December with Region 3, US Fish and Wildlife Services to discuss how to move forward. Wildlife Services is trying to be proactive before spring when the birds are here. Between now and December, stakeholders should come together and prioritize control sites. US Fish and Wildlife Service is not going to issue a depredation permit for all the existing sites. Les Cheneaux is probably the number 1 priority, but we do not want to lose ground anywhere. It appears that some of the sites that are currently being comprehensively managed will not be treated in 2017 and the chances of adding new sites like Saginaw Bay for comprehensive treatment are low.

The process needed to reinstate the successful treatment methods that were in use would require the US Fish and Wildlife Service to update the Cormorant Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Unfortunately, individuals that were involved with developing the original EIS have retired and currently there are no efforts being made to update the EIS. Unless there is renewed emphasis to provide better scientific documentation and properly update the EIS it could be many years before comprehensive cormorant management can be implemented again in Michigan and the surrounding states. This could result in the loss of many years of steady progress.

**Question:** The Committee would like a list of persons and their roles with agencies that are responsible for updating the Environmental Impact Statement. The Committee plans to follow-up and encourage faster action working towards reinstating comprehensive cormorant control in Michigan.

**Response:** Tony Duffiney indicated that he would provide a list of contacts.

### ***Nesting Colonies Update:***

***Les Cheneaux islands*** (we have access to all islands)

- Peak nest counts were 5,500 in 2003
- Nest counts were 791 in 2015

- Nest counts were 1022 in 2016
- Goal for 2016 was 250 nests

***Thunder Bay*** (islands are privately owned)

- Nest counts in 2006 were 3,364.
- Nest counts in 2015 were 630
- Nest counts in 2016 were 660
- Goal for 2016 was 452 nests

***Bays de Noc*** (it's a struggle to get counts out there in the large area)

- Nest counts 2006 were 9854
- Nest counts 2015 were 1170
- Nest counts 2016 were 3,739

***Beaver Island*** (trending down)

- Nest counts 2006 were 9854
- Nest counts 2015 were 2969
- Nest counts 2016 were 1965

***Ludington***

- Ultimate goal was to eliminate this colony.
- Nest counts 2007 were 532
- Nest counts 2016 were 35

***Saginaw Bay*** (no permission to access the islands)

- All control measures for Saginaw Bay must be conducted from the boat since the islands are private
- Goal was to remove 50% of 2,639 nests
- Took approximately 800 birds before the court ruling
- Cormorant control management has stopped until the program is reinstated

**Update on the Progress of Rewriting the Lake Huron Fish Community Objectives, (Randy Claramunt, DNR Lake Huron Basin Coordinator):**

This process has been delayed and is currently at an impasse. This rewrite is important as it sets the overall fishery management objectives for Lake Huron. Documents were being reviewed and revised by Ontario which was the lead agency, however, Ontario had a change in leadership, and this priority has been set aside. For now, the Department is going to put time into developing the Lake Huron Management Plan, with a longer goal of linking the management plan with the fish community objectives. Todd Grischke acknowledged that rewriting the fish community objectives will take years since it is a coordinated effort with multiple agencies. In the meantime, it is a good idea to move forward with the Lake Huron Management Plan since the current plan is out-of-date.

**Two Minute Season/Fishing Reports from Participants:**

***Rick Kretschmar*** – Due to the unseasonably warm temperatures and lack of ice cover, Saginaw Bay and its tributaries remained open much of the winter months allowing anglers to access Saginaw Bay and the surrounding rivers. Walleye fishing during February and March was some of the best in recent years with

many big limits of fish coming from both the Saginaw River and the Bay. It appeared that the average size was much above the summer average, possibly because many of these fish are pre-spawn and at their heaviest for the year and are heavily congregated in preparation for the spawning season.

April and May were pretty much a wash due to the heavy rain and strong winds that muddied the Bay and rivers, making for a poor opener in the inland waters. Some good catches of walleye were coming from the shallows during May when the conditions allowed.

Typical summer patterns began to set-up in early June and remained consistent through much of August. During the course of 3 Michigan Walleye Tour Tournaments in June and July, the catch rate and average size of fish from the inner and outer Bays appeared to be down from previous years, based on tournament results. This is a similar trend to what was observed in 2015. Whether it is forage related or warmer water, the lack of forage base still seems to be an issue. Walleye in the inner and outer Bays continue to feed heavily on gobies as evidenced by the winning weights in goby rich areas and tournament anglers using tactics to mimic goby activity.

At the Alpena tournament stop (which should produce the largest baskets of the year), larger than average fish were not evident. Consistent NE winds kept the near shore waters cooler than normal, never allowing for a thermocline to set-up or any stability in the water column which affects fish movement in the area. There were fish in the area, just not the size that should have been there at that time of year.

Perch fishing remained good to excellent in most parts, with many anglers taking 25 fish limits on the Bay. Lots of 4 to 7 inch perch were reported, which could be a good sign that higher water levels have flooded many lower areas, creating more habitat for young perch and other species to thrive.

**Dennis Gulau**— It was a good year on Saginaw Bay, the river provides a diverse fishery of walleye, bass and carp. There are good perch reports from the Bay. Smallmouth bass fishing has been great and is getting better each year. Five to six pound smallmouth bass are common. The excellent fishing is causing the southern part of the Bay to run out of parking spots.

**Jim Dexter** – Did some early season fishing with the kids on some local lakes.

**Judy Ogden** – Fishing out of Port Sanilac in April was slow while August and September were terrific. Anglers caught lake trout, steelhead, walleye, the occasional Atlantic salmon, along with a few Chinook salmon and Coho. Few yellow perch were caught. Diets contained bugs, shiners, smelt and gobies. Parking lots were frequently filled and anglers seem pleased with the diverse fishery. Atlantic salmon are returning to Lexington Harbor currently.

**Julie Shafto** – Spring was cold and windy. From May and throughout the summer, Rogers City was a world class lake trout fishery. Anglers also harvested Chinook salmon, walleye, Atlantic salmon, pink salmon, steelhead, and an occasional channel catfish. The Atlantic salmon harvest was the best I have seen. It was also a great year for Chinook salmon compared to previous years. It was encouraging to see smaller immature Chinook this year. Baitfish were abundant, including gobies, smelt, bugs, bloaters, and even some alewives. Chinook salmon in the area are eating gobies and many anglers commented about being successful fishing near the bottom to catch Chinook. Lamprey marks were way down.

**Steve Shafto** – Anglers are catching Chinook salmon along the bottom on cowbells and dodgers. There were good numbers of salmon this year at the weir.

**Todd Grischke** – Did some bluegill and perch fishing this summer. Looking forward to starting steelhead fishing next week.

**Jerry Brown**- North of Point Au Gres, kids used to fish gobies right off the end of his dock. They are not there this year. Perch and walleye are way down also. Au Gres and to the north seem to be slow; anglers need to go south to be successful.

**Lance Campbell** – Did not fish this year, but was involved in three tournaments. Lake trout in Oscoda were phenomenal. Salmon were harvested, but numbers were low. Every boat in every tournament had fish.

**Alan Seiferlein**– Disappointed with walleye at the mouth of Au Sable River. Lake levels are up, but that did not seem to help. There has been an increase in gobies, but that did not seem to help either. Some walleye were harvested after dark, but this year was slow. There were many pink salmon in the St. Marys River this fall but they were running smaller in size. Au Gres was consistent for walleye fishing 3-5 miles out.

**Randy Terrian** – The mouth of the Au Sable River was not what it was in the past for walleye. It was better between Point Au Gres and Point Lookout. Last year was just the opposite. The steelhead run was elongated, but the fish looked healthy and the numbers were good. Perch are larger and more anglers are harvesting them. The smallmouth bass fishery in the tributaries is excellent.

**Ken Merckel** – Walleye fishing off Grindstone was excellent. August brought in the winds, which continued into September. Lake trout were on the bottom in 140 feet of water. Steelhead were good in 60-80 feet of water in July through September. South of the harbor, anglers are still harvesting steelhead. There were a lot of Coho this year with pink salmon all over the place.

**Jim Johnson** – Julie Shafto is tracking Atlantic salmon. There have been many late season reports in July, August and September. Usually by then the mature Atlantic salmon head back to LSSU. This year even more are hanging around all the way to Lexington. There appears to be a good fall run of Atlantic salmon into the Lexington Harbor.

**Bryan Darling** – In May and June walleye anglers were heading to Saginaw Bay. Heard mixed reviews on the 8-fish limit from customers. Smallmouth bass picked up later. There is some great smallmouth fishing to be had in Saginaw Bay. Went to Northern Ontario and fished 40-50 feet of water due to 80-degree surface temperatures. However, after harvesting no fish, realized the water quickly stratified and moved into 6-8 feet along rocky edges and found success.

**Randy Claramunt** – Fishing largely takes place on Lake Michigan. First time he has not landed a salmon from Petoskey to the Straits. Spring lake trout fish was fast and furious; absolutely phenomenal.

**Matt Herbert**– It was a struggle to get out this year. Went bluegill and perch fishing with the kids, and got on the Chippewa River once for smallmouth bass.

**Scott Lutz**- Fished Platte Bay targeting Coho salmon. Fish were above average size and harvested them by trolling and jigging in 65-85 feet of water.

**Ken Glupker** – Bass fishing in Saginaw Bay was excellent this year, whether casting or trolling. With the warm winter in November and December, anglers went bananas on the Bay and caught a lot of fish. There was some very good fishing in the spring but the weather was often bad which reduced fishing

opportunities. During most of the season, few walleyes were caught under 18 inches but in the fall the smaller fish showed up.

**Jim Baker** – Fished 9 times in mostly Inner Saginaw Bay and caught fish every time but never limited out. The fishing was reliable and enjoyable.

**Tom Goniea** – Primarily an ice fisherman. Never got to fish the river this year. Made a couple trips for perch. Fished the Au Sable River for brown trout. Rediscovered his passion for bullhead fishing at night.

**Dana Serafin** – We are seeing natural reproduction of lake trout. The whitefish are bigger and the numbers are consistent.

**Ed Retherford** – Frank provided Ed's report. Ed fished out of Presque Isle this year. He was not on the boat until July, but it was the best year in the past few years. Harvested lots of lake trout, steelhead, Atlantic salmon along with some Chinook salmon and walleye.

**Ken Pletcher** – Frank provided Ken's report. The lake trout fishing in the Cheboygan was excellent around the islands and reefs in Lake Huron. Salmon fishing was good out in the lake, and there was a decent run in the Cheboygan River.

**Frank Krist** – Lake trout fishing was excellent out of Rogers City and Presque Isle. Pink salmon, Chinook salmon, steelhead, Atlantic salmon and walleye were regularly in the catch. Chinook salmon and steelhead often were found feeding on gobies. In addition, more Atlantic salmon were caught and their diet is very similar to steelhead with many bugs and gobies being eaten. It is a real exciting fishery that needs to be promoted more.

### **Moving Forward with the Lake Trout Stocking Reductions in Lake Huron (Todd Grischke, DNR Assistant Chief; Randy Claramunt, DNR Lake Huron Basin Coordinator):**

The lake trout fishery in Lake Huron is a huge success story. The Great Lakes Fishery Commission Lake Huron Committee sent a letter to the US Fish and Wildlife Service in September 2016 indicating that the following changes to lake trout stocking in Lake Huron will be implemented.

- Eliminate all lake trout stocking south of MH-2 (South of Thunder Bay) during 2018
- Reduce lake trout stocking by 50% in MH-1 and MH-2 (Thunder Bay to Drummond Island). During 2018
- This will be a lake-wide reduction of 62% from 1.4 million fish to 540,000.

Wild lake trout smolts are off the charts. These large cuts will be a massive change to federal hatchery production. These changes will not be implemented until 2018 because the fish are already in the hatcheries. They are within the facility for 12-18 months.

**Question:** With the success of lake trout, is the DNR considering opening the season the entire year?

**Response:** this is good question that should be included in the discussion of the Salmon Management Plan. Having the lake trout season open all year in at least MH-2 and south will be addressed on future agendas.

## **Status Report on the Experimental Commercial Whitefish Fishery in Southern Lake Huron with the Goal of Removing Commercial Fishing Nets from Saginaw Bay (Tom Gonica, DNR Aquatic Species and Regulatory Unit):**

*The Management goals* of introducing a commercial whitefish fishery in southern Lake Huron are to establish healthy, sustainable and diverse fishing opportunities in Lake Huron, while reducing commercial fishing in Saginaw Bay, and creating a more balanced perch and walleye population.

### ***Harbor Beach Permit Objectives:***

- Remove the greatest number of commercial licenses and gear possible from Saginaw Bay.
- Evaluate abundance and health of the whitefish population in Southern Lake Huron
- Harvest whitefish over 17 inches in total length without taking game fish species
- Evaluate and develop acceptable fishing grounds
- Evaluate the timely collection and public posting of trap net locations online
- Evaluate the potential long term sustainability and profitability of a fishery for whitefish in Southern Lake Huron
- Remove the largest commercial operation from Saginaw Bay
- Reduce the number of Saginaw Bay licenses by 25% (4)
- Reduce the number of Saginaw Bay trap nets by 29% (86)
- Reduce the Saginaw Bay commercial perch harvest by 50%
- Reduce the commercial by-kill of walleye in Saginaw Bay
- Increase citizen access to Great Lakes whitefish (85% of Serafin whitefish is sold in Michigan).

The potential future of this fishery would be one single license for 10 nets at Harbor Beach, which would remove the largest commercial operation from Saginaw Bay. One change this year was that Serafin was able to secure dockage at Off Shore Marina in Harbor Beach. This allowed multi-day trips, the ability to spread out gear, less dependency on weather, and direct offloading of catch in Harbor Beach.

Harvest results for 2016 were 162,000 pounds; nearly double 2015 at 77,227 pounds. The DNR made three monitoring trips, collecting biological data including length, age, sex, maturity and condition. The overall, harvest of other game species was minimal with lake trout making up most of the by catch and being released alive. The results of the 3 DNR monitoring trips are below:

### ***June 22 – 2 nets lifted***

Net 1: 15,000 lb. whitefish / 186 lake trout Released

Net 2: 3,500 lb. whitefish / 23 lake trout Released

**Totals:** 18,500 lb. whitefish / 209 lake trout Released

97.0% legal whitefish

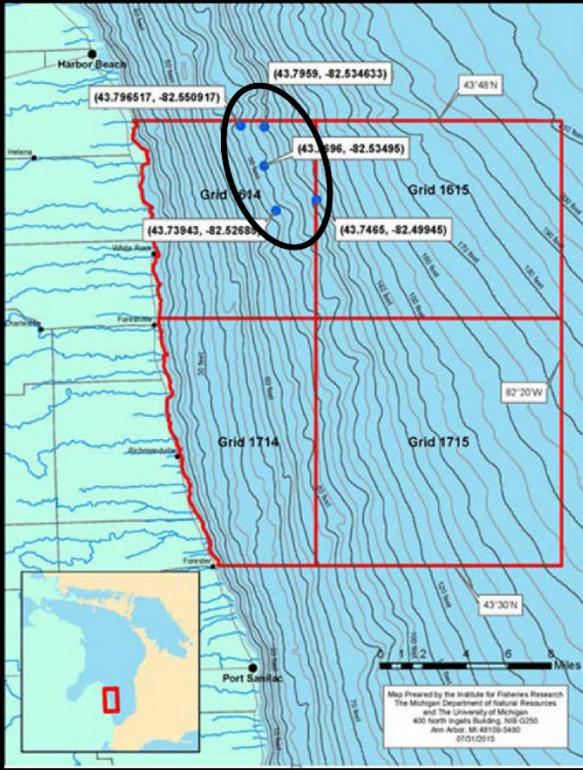
2.7% lake trout

0.3% other

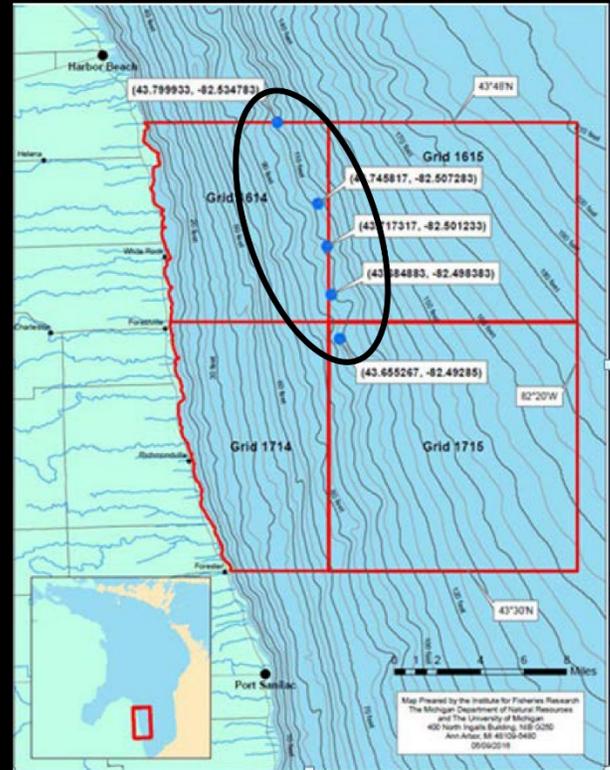
Assumption: average weight of whitefish = 2.5 lb

# Net Placement 15 vs 16

2015 Net Locations



2016 Net Locations



The map above shows the trap net fishing locations for 2015 and 2016

## August 3 – 5 nets lifted

- Net 1: 3,500 lb. whitefish / 138 lake trout Released
- Net 2: 4,200 lb. whitefish / 115 lake trout Released
- Net 3: 1,500 lb. whitefish / 116 lake trout Released
- Net 4: 1,200 lb. whitefish / 108 lake trout Released
- Net 5: 400 lb. whitefish / 52 lake trout Released

**Totals:** 10,800 lb. whitefish / 529 lake trout Released

85.6% legal whitefish

10.5% lake trout

3.9% other

Assumption: average weight of whitefish = 2.5 lb.

## September 20 – 1 net lifted

Net 1: 3,000 lb. whitefish / 162 lake trout released

87.1% legal whitefish

11.8% lake trout

1.1% other

Assumption: average weight of whitefish = 2.5 lb.

**NOTE:** Out of all 8 net lifts monitored in 2016, a total of 4 walleye were observed.

In 2017 the fishery will continue. Next year will be the third year of this three-year study. Serafin's permit allows up to ten nets. Only five nets were fished in 2015 and 2016, but all ten nets may be fished in 2017. The same Harbor Beach permit conditions and restrictions will be in effect, with the following additional requirements:

***Saginaw Bay 2017 license restrictions:***

License 807, 814, and 1122 may not be fished;

License 1119:

May be fished in Saginaw Bay from:

Jan 1 – May 30

Sept 1 – Dec 31

\*No fishing June 1 – Aug 31.

Limited to no more than 15 of 33 traps nets.

Yellow perch may not be harvested.

***Comment:*** Frank mentioned that DNR licensed commercial trap net whitefish fishers set nets for many years in the Rogers City area and the DNR, stakeholders and commercial fisher regularly met to discuss working together to minimize concerns. This provided an excellent relationship between all parties.

***Response:*** Todd mentioned that Judy, the DNR and others have met to discuss the new Harbor Beach commercial fishery and the plans are to continue those meetings.

## **Fisheries and Law Enforcement Manager Updates:**

***Craig Milkowski, Commercial Fish Specialist, DNR Law Enforcement Division*** – There have been reports of dead salmon in a net at Nunns Creek. This is ongoing with multiple attempts made to contact the fisher. A report was received about a wholesaler from Ohio coming into Michigan to buy emerald shiners and take them back to Ohio to sell. An attempt was made to catch the suspect, but no one showed and no bait was exchanged. Law Enforcement spent two weeks on Lake Michigan searching for a body which is still under investigation. We participated in a tour of the shipping channel in Chicago for Asian carp. There is an electrical barrier, but the drag zone behind the boat is a concern since juvenile fish in the zone may survive passage through the barrier. Law Enforcement boats were upgraded with new electronics that provide fantastic detail.

***Todd Grischke, Assistant Chief, DNR Fisheries Division*** – Fish Production Section was not able to attend the meeting today, but Aaron Switzer provided an update that when you think you have Atlantic salmon figured out; you do not. The hatchery is struggling with disease and density issues. Roger Greil at LSSU is also dealing with disease issues this year. We may not hit our 2017 target, but the fish we have look good. There have been some modifications to the holding pen at Lake Superior State University, and we plan to use that pen again this year.

The DNR is partnering with tribal agencies and approximately 30 additional agencies/interest groups in regards to reestablishing Artic Grayling. This will not be a stocking program; but an effort to look at best available habitat use incubators. We are learning from Montana, and trying to establish a self-reproducing population in the Manistee. Incubators are placed in the river prior to the release of the fish. The DNR will attempt to establish a hatchery brood stock to supply eggs to the incubators. Successful

tests were conducted in 2016, and will be continuing in 2017 with a goal of fully implementing the program during 2018.

***Dave Borgeson, Northern Lake Huron Unit Supervisor, DNR Fisheries Division*** – We harvested Chinook salmon eggs at the Swan River weir yesterday. Almost 2,500 fish were harvested and almost a million eggs. The unit also electroshocked the St. Marys River this year as part of our walleye stocking evaluation plan. We also met our walleye stocking targets at every site prescribed. Last year a state record smallmouth bass was harvested in Hubbard Lake, and this year a new state record smallmouth bass came from Indian River.

***Jim Baker, Southern Lake Huron Unit Supervisor, DNR Fisheries Division*** – It was a good average year for walleye pond production and the fish were stocked successfully in over five management units. The walleyes were planted in 26 lakes within 13 different counties.

There have been no noticeable changes in fishing patterns due to the new walleye/perch regulation changes; however, data still needs to be reviewed. The summer was warm and many fish moved into deeper water during July and August.

We conducted inland surveys on 14 lakes and 11 streams. There was a significant fish kill on the Sebawaing River that started yesterday. This was a pollution event and the Department of Environmental Quality is leading the investigation.

Atlantic salmon moved into the Lexington Harbor 10 days ago in good numbers. The warm water caused them to move out again. Both pier and small boat anglers are catching them. Lures with orange on them are working well.

***Dave Fielder, Research Biologist, DNR Fisheries Division*** – Conducted the annual Les Cheneaux fish community survey. The data are used to document the need for cormorant management control in the area. The data will be analyzed over the fall/winter. The Saginaw Bay survey (gill netting, bottom trawling) indicated the walleye catch rate almost doubled from last year. It does not look like our regulation change made much of a dent. We need to review the numbers this winter. The new research vessel the RV Tanner was online for both of those surveys, and worked very well.

***Ji He, Research Biologist, DNR Fisheries Division*** – The RV Tanner with the updated equipment is allowing us an opportunity to conduct more innovative surveys and investigate new areas.

***Randy Claramunt, Lake Huron Basin Coordinator, DNR Fisheries Division*** – Thanked everyone for coming and participating. This was a great discussion!

**Adjourn 3:07 pm**

**Lake Huron Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee meetings scheduled for 2017:**

**Tuesday January 31, 2017**

**Tuesday April 11, 2017**

**Thursday June 22, 2017**

**Wednesday October 11, 2017**