

# THE GREAT LAKES SPORT FISHING NEWS

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE MICHIGAN STEELHEAD & SALMON FISHERMEN'S ASSOCIATION

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## When the Voice Goes Silent: The Fall of Michigan United Conservation Clubs is a Wake-Up Call for Anglers

**Roger Hinchcliff**  
*Steelhead Manifesto*

For nearly a century, they fought for our waters. Now they're gone, and that should concern every angler who cares about the future.

There are moments that quietly pass... and then

there are moments that should stop an entire community in its tracks. The dissolution of the Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC) is one of those moments.

For nearly 90 years, MUCC stood as a unified voice for conservation in Michigan, representing an-

glers, hunters, and outdoor enthusiasts in the rooms where decisions are made. They weren't just part of the conversation.

They helped shape it. And now, that voice is gone. A Legacy Built on the Resource We Depend on Long before social media debates and online outrage, organizations like MUCC were doing the real work, boots on the ground, seats at the table, and constant pressure to protect what matters. They fought for clean water, public access, science-based management, and the rights of anglers and hunters across the state.

If you've ever stepped into a Michigan river, launched a boat, or chased a fish in public water, there's a good chance MUCC had a hand in protecting that

opportunity.

That's not opinion. That's reality. This didn't Happen Overnight. Organizations like MUCC don't just disappear. They erode. Membership declines. Engagement fades. Support weakens, we need to wake up and get involved. And eventually, even something built over generations can no longer stand.

This isn't about blame, it's about awareness. Conservation only works when people stay involved. As anglers, we're Not Just Users; We're Stakeholders in the resources.

We spend thousands of dollars every year on gear, boats, and travel. But how often do we invest in protecting the resource itself? Fish don't manage themselves. Rivers don't defend

themselves. Access doesn't maintain itself.

When organizations like MUCC disappear, they leave behind a vacuum, and that vacuum will be filled. The question is: by whom and with what priorities?

### This is a Wake-Up Call We Can't Ignore!

If an organization with nearly a century of history can dissolve, nothing is guaranteed. Not our fisheries. Not our access. Not our voice. That should hit home for anyone who truly cares about fishing, not just today, but years from now.

### Where We Go from Here

This is the moment where responsibility shifts from organizations to individuals. Support conservation organizations.

Stay informed. Show up. Encourage others to engage. Because conservation isn't something you consume, it's something you contribute to.

Each of us needs to carry the Torch Forward. MUCC's story doesn't end with its dissolution; it lives on in the waters we fish and the opportunities we still have. Never forget all the wonderful things they accomplished for us.

But legacy alone won't protect the future. That responsibility now falls on all of us. If we don't step up, this won't be the last organization we lose. We didn't inherit these fisheries from the past. We're borrowing them from the future. And right now, we're not holding up our end.

## Gerry Sickon Receives Distinguished Service Award



Gerry Sickon accepts Distinguished Service Award and MSSFA Lifetime Membership from Alan Douville, MSSFA President.

Gerry Sickon has been a Michigan Steelheader for 32 years, first joining the Huron Valley Chapter in 1993. He became Chapter Secretary and then began chauffeuring Carroll White, one of our more prominent state directors at the time to state meetings because Carroll had lost his sight in both eyes and needed assistance getting to state meetings. It wasn't long after Gerry was drafted to become the state's secretary as well.

Gerry attended Henry Ford Community College gaining degrees in HVC and Refrigeration. He worked for a number of niche companies in refrigeration technology before joining Ford Motor Company, first as a refrigeration engineer in the Ford Research and Engineering Division till today where he serves as Project Coord-

inator for the Installation Group. He has been on the leading edge of researching emission control technology at Ford for decades.

When the Steelheaders faced organizational challenges in 2010, and both the Executive Director at the time and MSSFA's Treasurer were asked to resign, Gerry stepped up and took on the new roll of Secretary/Treasurer. He served in this capacity ten years even though he had become a member at large due to the Huron Valley Steelheaders' dissolution. There has not been a more loyal teammate at the State level than Gerry Sickon. In recognition and appreciation of his distinguished service, the Board of Directors honored him with a Distinguished Service Award and a MSSFA Lifetime Membership at its Presidents Meeting in Lansing, MI.

## Michigan Steelhead Chapter Presidents Gather in Lansing, MI

By Rachel Ridley

MSSFA Chapter presidents and other officers from across the state gathered at the Michigan Historical Center in Lansing, on April 25, 2026. The meeting was called to order by President Alan Douville, who set the tone for open discussion and focused on two primary challenges: maintaining financial stability and growing/engaging membership—especially younger anglers. MSSFA remains financially stable, however the group faces declining membership since the COVID years as have other non-profit advocacy groups statewide. Spending has been managed to preserve the on-going activities and projects but the need to recruit and retain members—particularly young individuals is a major point of emphasis.

Traditional membership value like education and networking has been impacted by on-line resources like YouTube. Strategies to energize attracting new members were discussed and centered on increased social media engagement, member-only tools (e.g., AI fishing reports), tournament incentives for members, updated "Why Join MSSFA" messaging and reviving member perks like discount programs and recognition items.

Participants also learned about the latest legislative and advocacy updates. House Bill 5093 is expected to be voted on in the Natural Resources Committee in early June. We need to encourage all our members to reach out to their representatives to vote in favor of the bill should we get it to the floor in the House.



Photo credit: Holland Steelheaders Facebook Page

At the federal level, Congress is debating the Federal Sport Fish Restoration funding which is at risk if not reauthorized by July 1st. Randy Claramunt, DNR Fisheries Chief said, "If the funding is not reauthorized there could be severe impacts on hatcheries and staffing." Concerns were raised about a state budget error that could eliminate creel survey staffing. Cormorant population management (underfunded) and the Asian carp barrier project were topics

Randy covered as well. Lake Michigan fishery concerns centered around the Predator/Prey imbalance which may lead to up to 50% reduction in Chinook stocking beginning in 2027. The lighting

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**“Gather”**

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strike at the Little Manistee Weir and the resulting loss of ~1,700 steelhead broodstock and major egg production shortfall was discussed.

MSSFA’s ongoing involvement in dam safety and Consumers Energy attempt to sell its 13 Hydro-electric project dams was covered by Bob Stuber, executive director of the Michigan Hydro Relicensing Coalition.

Looking to the future this coming year, work is underway to create a centralized membership database for accuracy and access. Introduction of automatic membership renewals via online payment system and a plan to provide semi-annual financial reports to improve transparency.

Communications and outreach will include plans for chapter spotlights in Great Lakes Sport Fishing News. A desire to have chapters share regular content—not just major events so members get a sense of why it’s so rewarding to be a member. Recognition that better communication accomplishments is key to member retention.

A special portion of the meeting recognized two individuals who made significant contributions to MSSFA. We took time to recognize Congresswoman Debbie Dingell for being this year’s Howard A. Tanner Award recipient and the group recognized Gerry Sickon with a distinguished Service Award and Life Membership for his decade of service as MSSFA’s secretary/treasurer.

At the conclusion of the meeting, we had the opportunity to share chapter activity highlights which included a strong focus on tournaments and youth programs, veterans fishing events, community partnerships and fundraising. Many chapters report success with hands-on events and local engagement, though volunteer capacity remains a challenge.



Author Roger Hinchcliff, *Steelhead Manifesto*

## Finding The Correct Depth Catches More Fish

By Roger Hinchcliff  
*Steelhead Manifesto*

Spring has sprung, and there is still time to get in on some great Steelhead in the Great Lakes Streams. Most anglers know finding the correct depth helps them catch more fish. But many don’t know or get complacent while out fishing. The first thing any angler should do when fishing a new run is determine the depth. Unfortunately, many are so eager to fish they just start casting and fishing. I have seen many fishermen fish at the same depth all day through the years because they hooked up on a fish in the previous run at a certain depth.

Remember, a river is an ever-changing place with moving water with currents, higher water levels, different velocities, etc. Your fish finder may say four feet deep or waist-high while wading. This information gives you a great idea of the depth. However, a stronger current may lift the bait or even your weights higher in the water column taking you out of the strike zone.

Instead, if an angler would take a moment to determine what the float should be fishing at based on that run and the current river conditions, instead of just the actual depth reading.

For example, the river is four feet deep, but the

depth should be set at 6 feet due to the currents and river velocities at that particular section of the river. Remember, if your float fishing right, the offering will swing out ahead of the split shots and the float. Presenting just the bait to the fish’s nose.

### Making Adjustments

Some anglers go in reverse, start out at 6 feet, and work their way up, getting shallower. Or you can start at four feet and make minor six-inch adjustments until you hit bottom. Then, once the base has been determined, make those more minor adjustments at two to three inches at a time. The goal is to keep the bait near the river bottom of eight to

twelve inches.

You decide which method to use; just put it into practice and make it a habit. This process should be repeated throughout the day at every run you fish. Especially new runs or water you have never fished before.

Once you have determined what the run will do to the presentation and set the depth accordingly, based on the conditions, cover the water thoroughly and efficiently and change depth often, this will result in more hookups. Ninety percent of all Steelhead will be caught in four to eight-foot feet of water in most streams, depending on the water conditions.

### Float Stutter

For the angler who has his depth set right and is in the bite zone, the float should stop or slow ever so slightly displaying a stutter. Then keep on going and tracking along the seam perfect and at the right current speed.

The float should only stutter every so often. This alerts the angler that they are close to the bottom. Make another micro-adjustment shallower if the float stops and doesn’t continue tracking or leans sideways.

Another tip is to keep in mind certain baits such as spawn sacks, or natural bait has a tendency to be naturally buoyant. Hence, I recommend a micro shot on the leader when fishing for Steelhead with bait.

### Water Temps

Colder water temps affect the fish and its sight cone and bite zone. For example, when I’m jig fishing in the Great Lakes, the water can be super cold; near freezing, those fish become so lethargic that it’s a game of inches. Those fish are 8 inches off the bottom; therefore, I would like to present the bait at 10-12 inches off the bottom.

So, the fish only has to rise up a few inches to sip bait or offering in. Unlike when water temps are 48-50 degrees, they will hunt something down and crush it.

As you can see, water temps can dictate the fish’s mood and how far they are

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**Alan Douville, President**  
Michigan Steelhead & Salmon Fishermen's Association

Every time I walk down a pier, launch a boat, or talk with fellow anglers at a chapter meeting, I'm reminded why MSSFA matters.

This organization has never been just about

catching fish. It's about the people who care enough to protect the Great Lakes, to fight for responsible management, and to make sure steelhead and salmon are still here—not just for us, but for the next generation

# MSSFA PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## Alan Douville



of anglers standing at the rail for the first time.

MSSFA was built by anglers who understood that healthy fisheries don't happen by accident. They happen because people show up, speak up, and stay involved. Decades of recovery and success on the Great Lakes came from cooperation, science-based management, and strong advocacy—and MSSFA has been part of that story from the very beginning.

But we don't get to take that for granted.

Like many organizations, MSSFA has felt the effects of declining membership since COVID. While the association continues to operate re-

sponsibly and manage its finances carefully, the reality is simple: our strength depends on our members. When membership shrinks, our voice shrinks—and the Great Lakes need a strong, experienced voice now more than ever.

We are watching legislation that could affect commercial fishing, access, and long-term resource management. We continue to engage with the Michigan DNR and fisheries professionals who share our goal of sustainable, science driven decisions. We work to protect habitat, access, and the investment anglers have made through licenses, time, and advocacy. None of that happens if

MSSFA becomes quieter, smaller, or less engaged.

That's where each of us comes in.

If you're reading this, you're already part of the solution. But we need your involvement to go further. Bring a friend to a meeting. Encourage a fellow angler to join. Volunteer when you can. Speak respectfully and knowledgeably when issues arise. MSSFA is at its best when it reflects the collective experience, passion, and credibility of its members.

At the chapter level—especially—that involvement is critical. Chapters are the heartbeat of MSSFA. They're where new anglers learn, where relation-

ships are built, and where the next leaders are developed. Strong chapters make a strong state organization.

I'm proud of what MSSFA stands for, and I'm confident in where we can go—but only if we choose to stay engaged. The Great Lakes have given us incredible opportunities, memories, and traditions. Protecting them isn't someone else's job. It's ours.

Thank you for being part of MSSFA. I hope you'll stay involved, bring others along, and help keep this organization—and these fisheries—strong for years to come.

See you on the water.

—Alan

### "Depth"

Continued from page 2

willing to move or travel to get something.

#### Float Control

A presentation delivered at the correct depth and controlled correctly put the bait in the strike zone more frequently. Its simple mathematics this will result in more fish. As I write, it may seem very technical, and maybe in theory it is, but I believe more time on the water and this will become second nature to you.

Use the longer float rod to steer the float around the cover, trees, boulders, or seams. Mend the line only when necessary. Mending the line means you're keeping the line behind the float at all times and never letting the line get ahead of the float. This will result in a more natural presentation and the right current speed.

If you have a big bow in your line, reel the slack up or stop the spool. This trick will cause everything to straighten out to keep the presentation on the right track. However, this also has a significant side effect. It causes the bait to lift up due to current flow, and once the line is released, it causes the bait to slowly drop back down, resulting in a strike.

The Long Rod and Float are tools use them. Lastly, controlling the float and the speed of your presentation and slowing it down or stopping the float resulting in that lift is money on Steelhead.

Practice depth and float control every time while out on the stream, and you will see the results. The Greatest Barrier fish will have to overcome before they can rule the water is you if you fish right!



**Kelly Wolgamott, Vice President, Pure Michigan,** was the key note speaker at the event, kicking off National Travel and Tourism Week

SOUTH HAVEN, Mich. (May 4, 2026) — Tourism leaders from across Michigan gathered Monday at the Michigan Maritime Museum in South Haven to kick off National Travel and Tourism Week (May 3-9, 2026), highlighting the industry's critical role in driving the state's economy and supporting communities statewide.

The event, hosted by the Tourism Industry Coalition of Michigan (TICOM) in partnership with Pure Michigan and Visit South Haven, brought together industry leaders, media, and stakeholders to recognize the impact of travel across the state.

This year's National Travel and Tourism Week theme, "Postmarked: Essential," highlights that travel is not optional. It is fundamental to economic growth, workforce development, and community vitality. Nationally, travel generates \$3 trillion in economic output and supports 15 million jobs. In Michigan, tourism generates \$54.8 billion in total economic impact, including more than \$30 billion in visitor spending, and supports over 350,000 jobs statewide.

## Michigan Tourism Drives \$54.8 Billion In Economic Impact

"From downtown Detroit to the Porcupine Mountains, Michigan has so much to offer," said Lt. Governor Garlin Gilchrist II. "Tourism keeps our small businesses growing, our communities thriving, and our economy strong. This week, and every week, we are proud to celebrate the beauty and opportunity found all across our great state."

Speakers also highlighted the importance of the upcoming travel season and Michigan's continued appeal as a destination.

"Travel moves Michigan's economy, and National Travel and Tourism Week is an opportunity to highlight the significant impact of our state's thriving tourism industry," said Kelly Wolgamott, Vice President of Pure Michigan. "As we celebrate 20 years of Pure Michigan this year, we're proud to join our tourism partners across the state in showcasing the authentic destinations, cultural attractions and vibrant communities that make Michigan the ultimate four-season destination."

Held along the Lake Michigan shoreline, the event reinforced the importance of the Great Lakes to Michigan's identity and tourism economy. TICOM stakeholder, Dennis Eade, Executive director of the Michigan Steelhead and Salmon Fishermen's Association, remarked that "over 222,000 out-of-state fishers came to Michigan last year to fish our rivers, lakes and streams".

"South Haven is proud to host this year's National Travel and Tourism Week press conference," said Jen Sistrunk, Executive Director of Visit South Haven. "Tourism plays an import-

ant role in communities like ours, supporting local businesses, creating jobs, and inviting visitors to experience the beauty and culture of Michigan's Great

Lakes." Media attending the event had the opportunity to connect with destinations and tourism partners from across the state, participate

in interviews, and explore the Michigan Maritime Museum, which highlights the region's rich connection to the Great Lakes.

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**Dennis Eade, Executive Director**  
Michigan Steelhead & Salmon Fishermen's Association

HB 5093, the bill that would address the funding concerns of the Fisheries Division has had its hearing in the Natural Resources, Environment, Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Committee in the House and it went well with no opposition present to testify against the bill. Rep. Curt VanderWall (R) Ludington, MI sponsored the bill and is working with Committee Chair David Martin to get the votes necessary to get it passed out of committee. Martin wants to make sure he has the votes to pass it before he calls for a vote. The latest information I have received is that Committee Chair Martin will call for a committee vote on June 3rd. If it passes it will go to the Senate for reconciliation with SB 276-277. Sen. Cherry has indicated that the provisions for fisheries in HB 5093 will be adopted in reconciliation and the new

bill will be sent back to the House for a final vote and then sent onto the Governor for signing in early August. If this doesn't happen, the MDNR will have to go back to the special appropriations committee with a request for emergency funding or face additional layoffs and program cuts. We may even see some facilities close and sold off to the private sector such as some boat launches. Let's hope this doesn't happen.

Consumers Energy's proposed sale of 13 hydropower dams to limited liability subsidiaries of Hull Street Energy and then buy back the power for the express purpose of avoiding liability for future decommissioning costs, is being scrutinized by the Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC). An administrative law judge accepted briefs from both sides this past month and will make a recommenda-

## MSSFA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

### Dennis Eade



tion to the Commission by September. MHRC's attorneys presented a strong argument against the sale and the Natural Resource Commission weighed in with a resolution condemning the sale as a threat to public safety and the environment. The past two weeks of historic rain fall and flooding in northern Michigan has exacerbated the issue with many communities questioning the legislature's lack of investment in dam safety. We need to take advantage of these events and publicize the dangers of allowing the sale to take place.

The Lake Michigan Citizens Advisory Committee met this month and Basin Coordinator, Jay Wesley shared important information on salmon and trout in Lake Michigan. Sr. Biologist, Ben Turschak presented updates showing the predator/prey ratio has entered the cautionary stage moving to 0.055 for 2025. Age 1 and 2 Alewife dominate the population with much less older fish indicating age truncation, which is another sign of heavy predation. The lake wide technical committee will make the stocking decision in September. The consensus of advisors at the meeting is to reduce Chinook salmon stocking.

The storms that tore through northern Michigan in late April caused heavy rain and sever lightning strikes. The Betsy River was inundated with ground water run-off and the Homestead Dam was threatened but held. The Little Manistee River Weir and Egg Collection Facility was not so lucky. A major lighting strike to the main generator system burnt-out fuses and wiring to the backup generator system as well. 1700 of the 2000 brood stock steelhead were lost as a result and staff from all over the northern Michigan converged to pitch in and relocate the surviving stock to the Platte River Hatchery Facility. Because funding for hatcheries has been cut, there was no secondary eggtake facility other than the Little Manistee facility. The only

saving grace I can see is that wild steelhead returns were above expectations so we may have avoided a serious blow to steelhead recruitment moving forward.

The Cold-Water Steering Committee of Advisors met in Roscommon in late April and heard updates from the Lake Superior Basin Coordinator, Dave Carofino on Coaster Brook Trout and Brook Trout in general in the U.P. Dave also covered a recent Splake genetics study. The most encouraging subject that was discussed was that the Steelhead Work

Group's Report to the NRC has resulted in an initiative through Michigan State University to further research the factors affecting steelhead recruitment. The Strategic Decision-Making process will be applied to the factors identified in the report so we can focus on the factors most important to bolstering our understanding of the problem. Follow up meetings with the Task Force will take place in the coming months.

The Lake Huron Citizens Advisors will meet on April 27th at Jay's in Clare,

MI. Doug Shultz, Basin Coordinator, will cover the Lake Huron Salmon and Trout Management Plan and Scott Koenigbauer, USFWS, will cover the Cisco restoration update.

It is a very busy time for Steelheaders as boats are being put back in the water, fishing leagues are readying for the start of the season and everyone is prepping their tackle to be ready to catch these wonderful salmon and trout that we are blessed with in Michigan. Be safe and tight lines!



#### 2026 Tentative Print Schedule

Issue	Deadline	Print/Online Date
1	12/19/25	01/05/26
2	02/13/26	03/02/26
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Stafford Printing, <i>Printing</i> Greenville, MI	Cell: 616-928-8970 bonnie.glsfn@charter.net
Dennis Eade, <i>Managing Editor</i> Tel: 616-298-8842 Cel: 616-836-0037 deneade@charter.net	Laura Kleinhessel, <i>Layout</i> laura.glsfn@charter.net

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#### MICHIGAN STEELHEAD AND SALMON FISHERMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Business Office P.O. Box 8034 Holland, MI 49422 Tel: 616-298-8842 e-mail: deneade@charter.net	Dennis Eade, <i>Executive Director</i> Rachel Ridley, <i>Secretary</i> Alex Fergus, <i>Treasurer</i>
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The Michigan Steelhead and Salmon Fishermen's Association (MSSFA) is a multi-state, non-profit organization dedicated to educating the general public on improving, preserving and promoting sport fishing, the Great Lakes and their tributary streams and rivers. Commonly referred to as *The Michigan Steelheaders*, or simply *Steelheaders*. MSSFA represents sport fishing families in the Great Lakes region. MSSFA encourages the strictest observances of sport fishing laws and ethical fishing practices. [www.MSSFA.org](http://www.MSSFA.org)

#### MSSFA State Board of Directors, Officers and Staff

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<b>Dennis Eade</b>	Executive Director	deneade@charter.net
<b>Russ Sylte</b>	Vice President	sylder@aol.com
<b>Rachel Ridley</b>	Secretary	ridleyrachel@gmail.com
<b>Alex Fergus</b>	Treasurer	afergus63@gmail.com
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<b>Paul Nienaltowski</b>	Director	pauliquo@yahoo.com
<b>Bonnie Eade</b>	Accountant	bonnie.glsfn@charter.net
<b>Rebecca Goettl</b>	Membership Coordinator	mssfamembership@charter.net

By Michigan Hydro Relicensing Coalition

# OPINION: Amidst Cheboygan Dam Crisis, Consumers' Dam Sale Is Unthinkable

Right now, communities in northern Michigan and the U.P. are in a state of crisis. Record rainfall coupled with unseasonably warm weather has caused a buildup of snow to melt and put several dams in Michigan on the brink of breaching, threatening widespread flooding and damage.

The Cheboygan Dam on the Cheboygan River is on the brink, and on April 13, the Small Bucks Pond Dam near Barton City in Alcona County failed, draining an entire pond and washing away roads. Communities across northern Michigan are dealing with historic flooding that is causing many to have to evacuate their homes.

This crisis is a very real reminder that investment and management of critical infrastructure, like dams, is consequential for Michiganders across the state.

Amidst all of this, a plan for Consumers Energy to essentially give away 13

aging hydroelectric dams to an out-of-state private equity firm is before state regulators, with a final decision expected in September this year. The deal envisions Consumers buying back the power produced from the dams at a huge premium.

The Michigan Hydro Relicensing Coalition, which is made up of conservation organizations with membership across the state, has been opposed to this plan from the beginning due to the risks to our rivers and streams, our outdoor recreation, and our pocketbooks.

And we're not alone. In an unprecedented alignment of expert opinion, the Michigan Natural Resources Commission and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources have both come out strongly against the sale in early April. That was before

the current flooding event brought the downsides of the sale into the frame.

If the deal goes through, Consumers Energy will pass along the premium price it proposes to pay for energy from the dams to Michigan ratepayers, locking us into higher costs while receiving no benefits. The company is also passing along financial liabilities for keeping the dams safe and structurally sound – a recipe for disaster.

We can't trust private equity firms to manage the dams. The private equity firm, Hull Street Energy, would have little incentive to invest in long-term dam safety, which puts us at risk of more crises like we are seeing right now.

Transferring ownership of these dams could easily mean they are not properly maintained or could even breach, as happened



in Edenville, MI, in 2020 following heavy rains and years of poor maintenance

of the dam. The Au Train dam in the UP, which can't handle major floods and has

long-standing safety issues, is another example of what can happen when a dam isn't properly maintained.

As a publicly regulated monopoly, Consumers' actions are under significant state oversight. All that state leverage would disappear if the dams were sold. And we are seeing right now with the dam in Cheboygan that the fallback oversight plan, regulation done solely by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), amounts to virtually nothing. FERC has sent letters and demands to the dam's owners for years, with no resulting repairs or improvements whatsoever.

At the Cheboygan Dam, we were less than 5 inches away from disaster. Citizens packed their evacuation bags, public responders worked around the clock, and tax money was spent to avert a disaster. Our public responders had to race against the clock to fix a private power plant so that flood flows could be directed through hibernating turbines to get the water level down. That privately-owned power plant was allowed to be offline because the owners were able to secure multiple delays from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), presumably because they were not committed to the public responsibility they had for fixing the problems. FERC gave additional time to owners, but weather later showed there was no time to give. Our public responders should be applauded for their efforts in Cheboygan dealing with this crisis. As we respond, though, Michigan must stop putting itself in this situation over and over again.

State Sen. John Damoose, a Harbor Springs Republican whose district includes the flood-stricken Cheboygan County, said the crisis in his district has

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## Spring Walleye Fishing Tips

By FishUSA Staff

Spring is one of the best times of year to target walleye. As fish enter their pre-spawn and spawning phases, they become heavier, more aggressive, and more predictable. In this guide, we'll cover how to locate and catch spring walleyes using the most effective seasonal techniques, baits, and gear to help you maximize your success.

In early spring, water temperatures remain cold, and walleyes are often sluggish. However, once water temps approach 40°F, walleyes begin migrating toward spawning areas. These include rocky reefs, shallow flats near the main lake basin, and river mouths.

During this period, slow trolling can be highly effective. Use wide-wobbling crankbaits like the Rapala Down Deep Husky Jerk at speeds between 1.2 to 1.8 mph. Keep your baits running near or just off the bottom where fish are staging.

Another great option is a bottom-bounced worm harness, such as the Northland Baitfish-Image Spinner Harness. This rig works well for slow, lazy fish and can be trolled or drifted with excellent success.

### Spawning Period

Most walleyes spawn when water temperatures reach between 42°F and 50°F. Depending on your region, the spawn may begin in early April and extend for several weeks. On bodies of water like Lake Erie, spawning activity often varies based on location and water clarity.

Some walleyes spawn in rivers, like those that migrate up the Maumee River. Others remain in the lake and use rock reefs or gravel flats. Each behavior requires a slightly different approach:

### River Spawning Walleye

For river-run walleyes, a Carolina rig paired with a Northland High-Ball Floater Jig and a soft plastic like a Mister Twister Curly Tail Grub in white, chartreuse, or pink is a proven combo. Cast upstream and let the rig drift naturally along the bottom for best results.

### Main Lake Spawning Walleye

For walleyes staging on reefs, vertical jigging is a top choice. Use blade baits like a SteelShad or rip baits like the Rapala Jigging Rap. The technique often re-

sembles "video game fishing"—idle over structure with your electronics, find a group of fish, and watch your lure on screen as you jig it above the marks.

This is one of the most visual and exciting ways to fish for spring walleye, especially when the bite is strong and the fish respond quickly to your jigging cadence.

### Post-Spawn Walleye

After spawning, walleyes retreat to deeper water and begin feeding to recover. They often stage along the first break lines or drop-offs near their spawning locations. At this point in the season, trolling becomes the dominant technique once again.

Instead of holding tight to structure, these fish roam in search of baitfish. To stay on them, you need to cover water efficiently with baits

that can trigger reaction strikes.



Photo credit: gameandfishmag.com

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### Best Lures for Post-Spawn Walleye

- Plugs:** Berkley Flicker Minnows, Bandits, Bombers
- Spoons:** Michigan Stinger Scorpions
- Worm Harnesses:** Dreamweaver Wormburners

These baits can be trolled at various depths to locate active fish. Once you find a productive zone, adjust your trolling pattern to stay in contact with schools of walleye and increase your catch rate.

ing times to be on the water. Whether you're trolling crankbaits, vertical jigging over reefs, or drifting river mouths with soft plastics, the key is to match your technique to the fish's current phase—pre-spawn, spawn, or post-spawn.

Use water temperature and structure to guide your strategy. Explore these tactics on your home waters next spring, and you may just experience some of the best walleye fishing of your life.

### Final Thoughts

Spring walleye fishing is one of the most reward-



# Holland

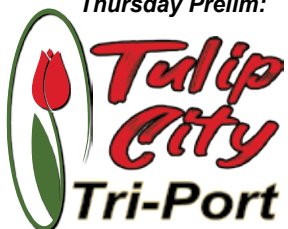
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### "Opinion" Continued from page 5

challenged his "pre-existing assumptions" that the private sector can manage dams capable of damaging property upstream or down if not properly managed." (Detroit News, April 18, 2026). And the Michigan Legislature has failed to act on the recommendations of the Michigan Dam Safety Task Force which was convened by the Governor following the disastrous Edenville and Sanford dam failures in 2020. The time for action is now as illustrated by the flooding crisis just experienced, and our

elected officials continuing to do nothing is no longer acceptable.

The Michigan Public Service Commission will make the final decision to approve or reject this disastrous deal. We urge it to deny Consumers' request in order to protect Michigan-ers' safety, pocketbooks and the environment.

Selling off these dams to a private equity firm while we are grappling with dam failures across the state seems unthinkable. The current crisis should serve as a wakeup call. Selling additional dams to private equity firms with no state oversight is not the answer.



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For those who love to fish but have no means, MSSFA chapters sponsor a "Crews" program that allows a sign up as a crew member for a day of fishing.

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This paper has no paid writers and has a grass roots style. Its writers are the every day fishermen who share their techniques and fishing adventures; and the paper has become well known for it's **January Special Edition** or "**Show Edition**" that is seen at all the spring expos and sport, boat and fishing shows throughout the Great Lakes.

Information in the paper covers the entire Great Lakes Basin region from Minnesota to New York including all five of the Great Lakes and their tributary streams.

Chapter members receive the paper as part of their membership. And because of the diversity of fishing in the Great Lakes, the information covers everything from river fishing, big lake fishing to inland lake fishing. The paper also offers a direct route for all new products and techniques on the market offered by our advertisers.

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# Michigan Commercial Fishing Attack on Sport Fishing

By Dan Kimmel

The poorly written, damaging to Michigan Sport Fishing commercial fishing bills have been introduced again. State House Bills 5801 and 5802, introduced by Representative Dave Prestin (former) and Representative Jason Morgan (latter), have been assigned to the House Committee on Natural Resources and Tourism. Note: Rep. Dave Prestin ((517) 373-0156 DavePrestin@house.mi.gov) is a member of the Natural Resources committee. Rep. Morgan (JasonMorgan@house.mi.gov (517) 373-0855) reportedly has family members in commercial fishing.

There's a number of issues with these bills starting with the fact that a total of 59 sponsors have signed on to these tie-barred bills. That's already more votes than the half needed to pass these bad bills out of the Committee to the floor. That could happen at any time.

What these bills do is rewrite Michigan commercial fishing law to pit it as an 'equal' against the Michigan Sport Fishery by adding multiple gamefish to the commercial fishing harvest, and allowing them to use just about any method possible to take those fish away from sport fishing including the use of deadly gill nets.

This is an attempt to put the \$5 BILLION per year Michigan Sport Fishery at risk opposed to the five million-dollar commercial fishery. To do so also in vague terms and definitions that would almost certainly bring about law suits in the first year if the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Fisheries Chief does not give commercial fishing say, an equal percentage of the annual walleye harvest. It's very



Gill net fishers feel the pinch. Photo credit: fishbio.com

probable this bill could cost the DNR a million dollars or more in law suits in the first year as the existing commercial fishers attempt to wrestle fishing harvest away from sport fishers for their profit.

The bills suffer from a number of errors including allowing commercial harvest of 'yellow pickerel' whatever that is?? I believe this is an old-time reference to walleye, but they ALSO mention the commercial harvest of walleye separately as an example of how poorly written these bills are.

Besides adding walleye to the Michigan commercial fishing harvest, they would allow perch and black crappie as well! No one has been able to explain why they are seeking commercial harvest of crappie. I'm not aware of a market for them, but they are specifically allowed in these bills. It's important to

remember some of the fish listed below as legal now to commercial fishing are supplemented often by stocking using dollars gained by sport fishing, NOT commercial fishing.

Other species allowed would be catfish, buffalo, burbot, carp, herring, chubs, suckers and whitefish. Lake trout, smelt and alewife are also referred to. Some of these fish are already allowed in existing commercial licenses. Much existing language is removed making it unclear if inland waters are also open to commercial fishing. It generally refers to the Great Lakes and connecting waters, but other language makes this vague, such as references to commercial fishing in rivers emptying into the Great Lakes?

It defines commercial nets as a fyke net, GILL net, hoop net, impoundment net, pound net, purse seine net, seine net, trap

net or trawl net allowing just about every kind of possible net. It requires the MDNR to set annual quotas for ALL listed fish species without defining what that quota should or can be. I have heard they want 50% for example of the walleye. That's the potential of less than 50 commercial fishers trying to harvest 50% of our walleye for profit. They believe they should have equal access to our GAME fish they desire despite the massive difference in value of Michigan's sport fishery verses its tiny commercial fishery.

These bills also give additional protections to commercial fishers similar to the sport fishing harassment law. Things such as you cannot wade or swim in a manner or at a location likely to cause a significant alteration in the behavior of aquatic species in order to hinder or prevent the lawful taking of an aquatic spe-

cies. What if a commercial fisher decides he wants to put his nets next to a public beach?? There are severe fines and imprisonment up to 93 days for violating the new terms of these bills including the phrase "Engages in any other act or behavior for the purpose of violating this section." Is it possible you could get a ticket just for fishing near commercial nets or lines?

I was told these bills do not force the MDNR to issue more, new commercial fishing licenses though the language to apply and do so is present in these bills, only limited by the vague terms of "sound scientific management through data gathering and analysis within each commercial fishing zone, shall determine the number of licenses needed to take fish within each management zone in an economic and profitable manner." You think if walleye are added, more

people will want to commercial fish them?

The bills also troublingly remove language the put important limits on commercial fishers about net placement limitations such as within 160 rods of on either side of a stream or river mouth, or an outlet of an inland lake emptying into the Great Lakes, and language that still allows for adequate safe passage of fish. Why would they remove these restrictions that are designed to prevent some conflict between sport fishing and commercial fishing?

Gill nets are particularly troubling because targeting walleye with them will lead to smallmouth bass being captured. It is common for fish to die in gill nets after a time even if the nets are pulled frequently. Yes, they would have to be thrown back, but they will still be dead to no purpose. There was language that dead fish not of the allowed species are to be dressed and given to the DNR, but that was removed along with language stating if more than 10% of dead fish other than 'herring, chubs, perch and pilot fish' (Menominee) are taken, then all of the other fish shall be disposed of by the department. Under-sized fish restrictions were removed too, replaced by some size limits later in the bill.

Language that designated Saginaw Bay as rough fish water was also removed. They want access to the perch and walleye now there in particular. Net restrictions that previously existed for Lake Erie and Lake Huron and their connecting waters, or southern Lake Michigan OR rivers and streams that connect to these bodies of water have also been removed.

**"Attack"**  
Continued on page 9

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**“Attack”**  
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**Targeted Fish**  
**Including Game Fish**

The bills do state what fish are allowed to commercial fishers from the waters of the Great Lakes open to commercial fishing as:

- Walleye
- Black crappie
- Lake whitefish
- Yellow perch
- Lake Trout
- Rainbow smelt
- Round whitefish
- Bloater chubs
- Cisco
- Most sucker, hogsucker, quillback and buffalo
- Freshwater Drum
- Burbot
- Gizzard shad
- Common carp
- Catfish and bullheads
- White perch
- White bass
- Rock bass
- Alewife

“By December 31, 2025 and each year thereafter, establish a total allowable harvest for lake trout, walleye, and perch within the waters of the Great Lakes that are under the jurisdiction of this state and allocate a portion of the total allowable catch for each species within each management zone open to

commercial fishing based on the market demand for those species used for human consumption and the opportunity for a licensee to fish in an economic and profitable manner.”

This is example of where the law suits will come from. What does any of that actually mean, and how can the Fisheries Division work with that? Market demand and profit should not be deciding factors for commercial fishers wanting to take our sport game fish.

“All live fish on which the season is closed or is not authorized for harvest must be returned to the water at once with as little injury as possible by the person taking the fish. Any dead fish, on which the season is closed or is not authorized for harvest, must be returned to the water at once by the person or persons taking the fish or disposed of in accordance with any specific instructions provided by the director.”

I believe they want to be able to keep non-allowed commercial fish and sell them as bycatch. The language removed, and the language like the previous

**“Attack”**  
Continued on page 10

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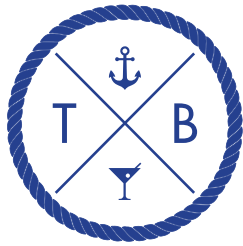
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1. Pinnebog River – Hume Township

The Pinnebog River is a short but unique river that flows through Port Crescent State Park into Lake Huron. This river offers shore and pier fishing, with a chance of catching carp, catfish, smallmouth bass and many more. Don't forget to pack lunch for the family to en-

joy on the many picnic tables.

2. Brimley Bay – Brimley

Head to the Upper Peninsula for shore, pier and boat fishing. Don't have a boat? Brimley Bay offers boat rentals so your family won't miss out on catching bullhead, whitefish, yellow perch, northern pike, bullhead and sunfish. Invite your furry friends for a complete family trip because this fishing shore is animal-friendly!

3. Boardman River – Traverse City

Named one of the top 10 trout streams in Michigan, Boardman River includes 160 miles of river and tributary streams, plenty of options for all ages and families. Bring your boat



Fishing in Michigan | Photo Courtesy of Pure Michigan

and utilize the boat launch to catch brown trout, rainbow trout and yellow perch. Cool down after a day on the water by walking the trails.

4. Kalamazoo River – Kalamazoo

While fishing is a must at this river, so is kayaking. Make it a unique family fishing trip by bringing or renting kayaks for the whole family. Stay close to shore and find walleye, rock bass and many more fish species, while enjoying the

beautiful and relaxing ride.

5. Silver Lake – Hart  
This lake offers the ultimate fishing experience, with camping and swimming available, a weekend trip is a must. Don't know how to fish? Local fishing

guides are available to share their tips and tricks with the entire family.



Photo credit: dwr.virginia.gov

**“Attack”**

**Continued from page 9**

quote may open us up to the sale of ‘accidentally’ caught smallmouth bass.

This additional language seems to say otherwise, but they appear contradictory to me added to other language in the bills:

“A person shall not sell or offer for sale at any time fish not listed in subsection (1 – the list of allowable fish above) when the fish was taken under a commercial fishing license issued by this state. Any such fish, whether dead or alive, must at once be returned to the waters from which it was taken by the person or persons taking the fish with as little injury as possible. (8) A person shall not sell or offer for sale any fish not listed in subsection (1).”

“Black crappie, also known as calico bass, in Lake Huron from June 1 to August 25. In Lake Erie, Lake Michigan, and Lake Superior, black crappie

may not be taken at any time.” This appears to be old language in commercial fishing law, but white crappie is not mentioned and not listed under the allowable fish. Do commercial fishers know how to accurately tell the difference between white crappie and black crappie. Is Lake St. Clair open or closed to the commercial harvest of crappie?

There is a penalty for any commercial licensee that retains more than 5% undersized fish at any given time on board a vessel, truck or fish storage facility, which is odd because they are not supposed to keep undersized fish?

Other bad language, they keep in their separate definitions for minimum length of 17 inches on both lake trout and ‘ciscowet trout’ which is an alternate spelling of an old name for lake trout apparently. To be clear, it should just be lake trout. Kind of like walleye referred to in places, while

other places refer to ‘yellow pickerel.’ And they have separate lengths of 15-1/2 inches for walleye with 11 inches for ‘blue pike???’ What does that even mean?

5801 is a very long bill with a lot of confusing language including removals and additions. Some old, many new, that make it difficult to determine the full consequences of this becoming law, but the gist of it is commercial fishers want walleye and perch to take and sell, and this could seriously impact the dramatically more significant sport fishery that is vastly more important to the State of Michigan, and also, sport fishing has paid for massive stocking of walleye, not commercial fishing. Why would we give them ‘their share’ of our fish?



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29	K & M Marine	14990 Telegraph Rd	Pacford	MI	48239	10% off merchandise except sale items. (www.kandmmarine.com)
30	Kamp Oil Inc	6467 Marquette St	Proctor	MI	49733	Cargo Sea & Snow 4-1 gal case 13.99/gal = 54/case, other disc avail.
31	Kamp Oil Inc	3650 Eastern Ave SE	Grand Rapids	MI	49508	Cargo Sea & Snow 4-1 gal case 13.99/gal = 54/case, other disc avail.
32	Keebe Oil Co (aka Kamp Oil)	4889 32 Mile Rd	Utica	MI	48317	Cargo Sea & Snow 4-1 gal case 13.99/gal = 54/case, other disc avail.
33	Lapsar Boat Service	3556 Fort Knox Dr	Lapsar	MI	48446	10% off parts and labor (616-245-6033)
34	Liberty Tax Service	644 E. 8th St	Holland	MI	49423	\$20.00 Discount on tax service
35	Logan's Fun Muskegon River Cottage Rental	1640 Gardner St	Newaygo	MI	49337	10% Discount www.logansfun.us 616-485-4501
36	Mark's Sport Shop	11530 Mason Dr	Grant	MI	49327	Member Discount
37	MUKG	2101 Wood Street	Lansing	MI	48912	\$15.00 Membership Dues
38	Patrick Custom Fishing Rods	15919 6th Ave.	Gables	MI	49666	10% Discount 269-628-5227
39	Richfield RV	Statewide				10% Discount
40	River Pointe Marina & Campground	2502 E. Elm Avenue	Monroe	MI	48161	Buy 1 gal 1 free - call 313-575-4367 (www.riverpointemarina.com)
41	FOX Optical	Statewide				Plan 303
42	Salmon Trout Steelheader		www.salmontroutsteelheaders.com			Discount 50% OFF 1 year subscription, members only! Use code MSSFA
43	Sun Coast Marine	1172 88th Street	South Haven	MI		Member discount
44	The Angling Outpost	2480 Duck Lane Rd	Whitehall	MI	49881	www.anglingoutpost.com 5% Use coupon "steelheader" for online purchases
45	Trootech Corp	14754 N Oakley	Chestering	MI		269-645-5969 10%
46	Wan's Sport Center	1895 Alpine Ave.	Walker	MI	49544	10% Discount
47	Warrior Lures	6816 Loran La	Traverse City	MI	49684	10% Discount on all product ordered (www.warriorlures.com)
48	West Marine		Bay City	MI		10%
49	West Michigan Propeller	647 Ionia Ave. NW	Grand Rapids	MI	49503	10% Discount
50	* Your Fishes Here!					

# Planning A Fishing Trip

By Bob Jensen

Getting ready to go on a fishing trip should be an easy thing. That's what I used to think. After going on many, many fishing trips over the years, I've learned that some planning is a good idea. Whether you're going for a day, a weekend, or on an extended fishing trip, some planning can make your trip much more enjoyable and productive. Following are some things that I've learned about planning a fishing trip.

For some of us, our first open water trip of the year will be a short one close to home. Other anglers are making plans to be gone for several days at a more distant location. Longer trips require more planning. I learned the expensive way that it's important to consider the weather that will be in the area that you're traveling to, not the weather that is currently at your home. Too many times I forgot that. I would look outside and pack clothing that was appropriate for the local weather. Much of the time I would be traveling six or eight hours from home, and most of the time the weather was much different where I was going



South Dakota fishing guide Joe Honer uses plastic baits to catch walleyes.

to be fishing than it was at home. This poor preparation resulted in trips to the local sporting goods store to get appropriate clothing. Prepare for the weather where you're going, not where you are.

Now about packing the proper baits for your fishing trip. Some baits and techniques are seasonal. A slow moving lure will usually be best early in the year when

the water is still cool, and a faster presentation will be more productive when the water is warmer. There is a constant thing to keep in mind. Always pack plastics. Regardless of what species of fish you're after or the time of year, plastics will be reliable fish-catchers. There might be times when live bait is better, and there might be times when a faster moving crankbait is

better, but a plastic bait in some form will almost always appeal to the fish.

Plastic baits are good baits to include in your fishing travels for several reasons, but mostly because they're easy to travel with. Live bait requires care, and caring for live bait can be challenging when traveling.

A very versatile plastic for bass, walleyes and pike is a Rage Swimmer. For panfish, a Mr. Crappie Grub is a good choice. These baits have action tails that vibrate as they move. They're rigged on a jighead and can be fished quickly.

If fishing is really tough, it's hard to beat a jig rigged with a Ned Ocho. This plastic body puts off very minimal action, and on days when the fish are finicky, that's what will get them to bite.

Plastic baits come in a variety of colors, shapes, and sizes, and can be fished quickly or slow. That's a big advantage. There will be times when a particular color is what the fish prefer, but if you have some bodies in chartreuse, white, black, and pumpkinseed, you're going to be good in most situations.

Before you leave home make sure that you have the licenses and permits

necessary for where you'll be fishing. Also make sure that you know of any regulation changes.

The planning part is almost as much fun as the fishing part of a fishing trip. Now all we need to do is get the weather to cooper-

ate, and that's something that we can't plan for.

For more information, contact your Chapter Membership Director or email [mssfamembership@charter.net](mailto:mssfamembership@charter.net)



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## FishPass Flood Heroes

By Ross Boissoneau |

The unprecedented flooding throughout the region, including the Boardman-Ottaway River, forced road closures, caused sinkholes, destroyed bridges, and was, by any stretch, a disaster.

Yet it could have been much worse if not for the efforts of what Leah Bagdon McCallum calls local heroes. "The silver lining was how well and how quick people responded," says McCallum, pointing to crews from Team Elmer's, AECOM, and Spence Brothers Construction.

McCallum is a consultant and project lead for the Traverse City FishPass project. It was designed to replace the aging Union Street dam and provide an opportunity for native fish to head upstream while preventing aquatic invaders like lampreys from doing the same.

"The old dam—had it not been removed, things would have been different. Its safety rating was the same as the Midland dam that collapsed," McCallum says, referring to the Edenville Dam in Midland County, which failed in 2020 following a heavy rainfall, destroying hundreds of homes and properties and causing tens of millions of dollars in damage.

### Rising Waters,

### Rising to the Occasion

Our storm was not without consequences. Not only did the Beitner Bridge collapse, forcing its proposed

2027 replacement to be moved up, but McCallum says the Brown Bridge Overlook was washed out and the Oleson Bridge was shifted.

While the results could have been worse, McCallum says if the FishPass project hadn't been delayed for years by lawsuits, it would have been completed by now, which would have prevented much of the damage. "It's bittersweet. It would have been done," she says.

McCallum says those connected to the project had been paying close attention to the weather. "We'd been watching it," she says, and had been preparing in advance. Spence Brothers, general contractor for the FishPass project, was monitoring storm water levels due to forecasts for significant rain.

"Team Elmer's crews installed earthen berm to divert water and other storm water control measures to reduce erosion in advance of the storms. In anticipation of heavy rains, a night watch group was monitoring water levels," says Justin Kelenske, excavation division manager for Team Elmer's. The company is a sub-contractor on the FishPass project, providing excavation and dam removal services.

When water began to push through the partially completed FishPass, the response was immediate.

"Fish Pass"

Continued on page 13



# SOUTH HAVEN PRO AM

## MAY 16<sup>TH</sup> & 17<sup>TH</sup>

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- BIG FISH CONTEST

**SUNDAY MAY 17TH**

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  - PRO \$500 / AM \$300
- PAYOUT
  - PRO \$9,000 1<sup>ST</sup> PLACE
    - BASED ON 25 BOATS
  - AM \$5,000 1<sup>ST</sup> PLACE
    - BASED ON 30 BOATS
- BIG FISH CONTEST

**ADDITIONAL CONTESTS:**  
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 SOUTH HAVEN & SAUGATUCK DUAL PORT CHALLENGE  
 333 TOURNAMENT TRAIL

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**2026 Battle Creek Steelheader's Calendar of Events**

Month	Date	Event	Location
May	16	LK MICHIGAN SPRING TOURNAMENT	BENTON HARBOR/ SOUTH HAVEN
May	30	CONNIE MCGOWEN INVITATIONAL	LAKE ERIE/DBBC
July	12	PORTAGE LK PANFISH/FAMILY PICNIC	PORTAGE LK
August	15	VETERANS OUTING	SOUTH HAVEN
October	24	KALAMAZOO RIVER SALMON SLA	ALLEGAN DAM
November	7	KALAMAZOO RIVER TROUT QUEST	ALLEGAN DAM
November	14	KALAMAZOO RIVER MEMORIAL	ALLEGAN DAM
November	28	ST.JOE FALL STEELHEAD	I-94
December	5	CHAPTER CHALLENGE	TBA
December	12	CHRISTMAS PARTY	KALAMAZOO EAGLES

**Meetings are held every 3rd Tuesday of the month. 6:00 pm Social, 7:00 pm Meeting**  
**Meeting Location: (In process of finding a new location)**  
**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**  
**Joe Foy at 269-303-1894 / Dan Foster at 269-370-3693**  
**battlecreeksteelheaders.com**

**2026 Grand Haven Steelheader's Calendar of Events**

Month	Date	Event
May	28-31	GH Offshore Challenge
July 31 - August 13		Week Long +
August	13	Picnic
September	12	Sportsman for Youth
December	10	Christmas Party

Other Events TBD  
 For information on these events and other information on the Grand Haven Steelheaders contact GHS President and State Director Paul Zelenka at pbzfarms@gmail.com  
**www.ghsteelheaders.com**

**2026 Grand Rapids Steelheader's Calendar of Events**

Month	Date	Event
May	4	Board Meeting
May	TBD	Big Lake Outing*
May	18	Membership Meeting, Year Long Fishing Awards
June	4-6	Lake Erie Walleye Outing*
June	TBD	Wabasis Fish Outing*
June	29	Membership Meeting
July	13	Chapter Picnic @ 6pm, Johnson Park Shelter House**
August	1	GR/GH Chapter Challenge & Double D Tournament*
August	31	Membership Meeting
September	14	Board Meeting
September	28	Membership Meeting
October	5	Board Meeting
October	24	Fall Outing / Buck Contest**
October	26	Membership Meeting
November	2	Board Meeting
November	7	Fishing Partners*
November	30	Membership Meeting
December	7	Chapter Christmas Party**

\* - Times/Events subject to change, watch facebook & email blasts  
 \*\* - Members and Member's family only event.

**NEW MEETING LOCATION:**  
 Jackson Street Hall, Polish National Aid Society  
 921 Jackson Street NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49504  
 616-774-9011

Events open to the public  
**Meeting Location** - Elks #48, 917 Bridge St NW, Grand Rapids  
**Time:** 6:00pm-7pm Social Hour with food and beverage followed by Speaker  
 Board Meetings will take place after the regular Member Meeting  
 Email Grand Rapids Steelheaders: fishgrsteelhead@gmail.com  
 Dates with \*\*\*\* are for members and family only

**2026 Great Lakes Bay Region Calendar of Events**

Month	Date	Event
May	2	Linwood
May	5	Meeting
May	16	Linwood
May	30	Sebewaing
June	9	Meeting
June	13	Sebewaing
June	27	Linwood
July	7	Meeting
July	11	Manistee
July	25	Ludington
August	8	Frankfort
August	22	Manistee (2-Day)
September	1	Meeting
September	12	Linwood
October	6	Meeting
November	3	Meeting
December	1	Meeting
December	12	Banquet at VFW 5pm*

**Contact Port Chairman no later than Monday prior when attending outings**  
 Pull lines at 1:00pm on Saturdays, 12:00pm on Sundays (2-Day Outings). Port chairman will call the end of the outing on Channel 72 all Boats must check in.  
 Board/Membership meetings at VFW Hall in Midland at 7:00 pm (No Meeting in August)  
 On the day of the outing, port chairman will call the outing start on Marine Radio, Channel 72, All Boats must confirm they are fishing.  
 Weigh-in follows each outing. Picnics follows weigh-in on Saturdays only.  
**New Rule: Weight in is at 2:00pm "Sharp" No Exceptions**  
 Outings: All Steelheaders members pay \$5.00. All non-Steelheaders pay \$10.00 to participate. Children 16 and under are free.  
 Banquet: Drinks at 5:00pm Dinner at 6:00pm (Potluck Style)

**2026 Holland Steelheader's Calendar of Events**

Month	Date	Event
May	1-3	Michigan City Tournament
May	7-9	St. Joseph Tournament
May	11	Board Meeting
May	15-17	South Haven Tournament
May	16	Spring Challenge
May	19	League Start
May	28-31	Grand Haven Tournament
June	8	Board Meeting
June	26-28	Manistee Tri-Port Tournament
June	27	Kids & Kings
July	11	Fishing With Veterans
July	13	Board Meeting
July	13-19	Ludington Tournament
July	23-26	Muskegon Tournament
July	25	Summer Challenge
July 30 - August 2		Holland BRC Tournament
August	7-9	Saugatuck BLC Tournament
August	10	Board Meeting
August	14-16	Manistee Monster Tournament
August	15	Ladies Tournament
August	25	League End
August	27-30	Frankfurt Tournament
September	8	League Dinner
September	14	Board Meeting
October	12	Board Meeting
November	9	Board Meeting
December	3	Membership Meeting
December	14	Board Meeting

Board meetings held at: TBD Locations  
 General Membership: Bayshore Yacht Club at the Yacht Basin Marina  
 Doors open at 6 pm., Dinner at 7 pm., speaker to follow

For event information, go to hollandsteelheaders.org, or call Jimmy Van Brocklin 616-240-7017 or email Brad Stephenson at brad.stephenson32@gmail.com

**2026 Metro West - Livonia Steelheader's Calendar of Events**

Month	Date	Event	Contact
May	3	Carp Fishing Event	
May	5	General Membership Meeting	
May	9	Lake Erie Walleye Tournament	
May	16	Pt Moule' Kayak/SB SM Bass/Walleye	
May	16	Howard Tanner Salmon Tour. Benton Harbor Sat	
May	17	Howard Tanner Salmon Tour. Benton Harbor Sun	
May	19	Kensington Kayak/SB Monthly Tue Outings	
May	23	Bruin Lake Kayak/Small Boat	
May	23	Sterling SP Walleye Tournament	
May	30	Lake Erie Walleye Tournament	
June	2	General Membership Meeting	
June	6	Kids Fishing Outing at Kensington Park	
June	13	Halloway Reservoir Kayak/SB	
June	16	Kensington Kayak/SB Monthly Tue Outings	
June	20	Lake Erie Walleye Tournament	
June	27	SW MI River Kayak Catfish/Pier Scrams	
July	7	Club Summer Picnic	
July	11	Manistee River Cleanup @ High Bridge	
July	11	Saginaw River Catfish Kayak/SB	
July	21	Kensington Kayak/SB Monthly Tue Outings	
July	23	Ludington Salmon Tournament - Thu	
July	25	Ludington Member Memorial Tour - Sat	
July	26	Ludington Salmon Tournament - Sun	
August	1	Erieau Tournament - Sat. Erieau, Canada	
August	4	General Membership Meeting	
August	8	Salmon Tournament - Manistee - Sat	
August	9	Salmon Tournament - Manistee - Sun	
August	15	Salmon Tournament - Ludington	
August	16	Salmon Tournament - Ludington	
August	18	Kensington Kayak/SB Monthly Tue Outings	
August	22	PM Lake Kayak/Small Boat	
September	1	General Membership Meeting	
September	5	Manistee Kayak/SB & Pier Tournaments	
September	15	Kensington Kayak/SB Monthly Tue Outings	
September	26	Manistee River Tournaments	
September	26	Revisit PM Lake Salmon Kayak/SB	
October	3	Harrisville Area kayak/SB/shore	
October	6	General Membership Meeting	
October	10	Lake Erie Perch Outing	
October	14	Captain/Crew/River Angler '26 Cal. Mtg	
October	17	Ludington Pier/Beach Event	
November	3	General Membership Meeting 2nd Tue.	
November	7	Manistee River/Pier/Shore Tour. w DS	
November	14	Ohio Walleye Tournament	
December	1	CHRISTMAS PARTY - HAPPY HOLIDAYS	
December	5	PM & other NW Mi Rivers Tournament	
December	19	Huron River Tournament	

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**2026 South Haven Steelheader's Calendar of Events**

Month	Date	Event
Note: SH Steelheaders (SHS) Chapter Events in BOLD * = Not Confirmed		
MAY	2-3	Horizon Bank Quake Coho Classic - Michigan City, IN
MAY	8-9	St. Joe Tourney/SW Chapter
MAY	15	(New) South Haven Steelheaders' Harbor Light Brewery Ladies and Youth Tournament
MAY	15	The Lodge SH Steelheaders Pro Am Tournament Captains Registration - The Lodge
MAY	16-17	South Haven Pro Am Tournament - South Side City Marina
MAY	23	Merle Morris Tournament - River Bend Boat Club
JUN	6-7	Free Fishing Weekend
JUN	12-14	South Haven Harborfest
AUG	8	SHS Fish Boil (Blueberry Festival - August 6th- 9th)
AUG	15	SHS Operation Injured Soldier/SH Salute to Veterans
SEP	5	Labor Day Weekend
NOV	9	2027 Pro Am Tournament Committee Kick-off meeting
NOV	28	South Haven Steelheaders River Tournament
<b>2026 South Haven Steelheaders Membership &amp; Board Meeting Dates</b>		
<b>Note:</b> All Board and membership meetings are generally held the third Thursday of each month except for special circumstances such as Pro Am Captain's Meeting set up in May, Fish Boil organizational meeting in August and prior to Deer Season in November.		
<b>Meeting Location:</b> South Haven American Legion Post 49, 129 Michigan Avenue, South Haven, MI 49090 Board Meetings start at 5:45pm and membership meetings at 7:00pm. For more information email: rachapman1@comcast.net		
*MAY 14th - 2nd Thursday *prior to SHS Pro/Am - Membership meeting/Ladies and Youth Tournament. Registration at American Legion.		
JUNE 18th - 3rd Thursday		
JULY 16th - 3rd Thursday		
AUG 20th - 3rd Thursday		
SEP 17th - 3rd Thursday - Regular & Board meeting to prioritize & set next year's events. ID event chairs.		
OCT 15th - 3rd Thursday - Regular and Board meeting to finalize next year's events and set calendar, nominations for Board of Directors.		
November/December - No membership meetings		

**2026 Southwest MI Steelheader's Calendar of Events**

Month	Date	Event	Information
Membership meetings and board meeting are held the second Thursday of each month but please confirm online for the most updated information. <a href="http://www.swmsteelheaders.com">www.swmsteelheaders.com</a> <a href="http://www.facebook.com/southwestmichigansteelheaders">www.facebook.com/southwestmichigansteelheaders</a>			
MAY	8-9	The Shootouts Spectacular	West Basin Marina, St. Joseph MI
JUNE	4	(Club Meeting) Charter Captain's Roundtable	Elks Lodge, Benton Harbor MI
JUNE	19-20	Trolling with the Troops	Legion Post 568, Stevensville MI
SEPTEMBER	10	(Club Meeting) Fall Wrap-Up - Happy Hour Discussion	The Buck & Brew, St. Joseph MI
DECEMBER	5	Winter Challenge River Tournament #1	The Sandbar, St. Joseph MI
<b>Meeting Location: Elks Lodge, 601 Riverview Drive, Benton Harbor MI 49022</b>			

**2026 Thumb Chapter Steelheader's Calendar of Events**

Month	Date	Time	Event	Location / Information
May	3	6:00am	Can2Can Fishing Tournament	Harbor Beach Marina -- NEED WORKERS!
June	14	6:00am	Veterans Fishing Outing	Harbor Beach Marina - Contact Kevin Ramsey for details
June	19	7:30pm	Regular Meeting	Harbor Beach American Legion
August	21	7:30pm	Regular Meeting	Harbor Beach American Legion
October	16	7:30pm	Regular Meeting	Harbor Beach American Legion - Election of Board/Officers
<b>Contact Luke Gehring at 989-550-3121 for inquiries.</b>				

**2026 Thunderbay Steelheader's Calendar of Events**

Month	Date	Time	Information
May	16	5:30am	Alpena Tournament
June	13	5:30am	Presque Isle Tournament
June	27-28	5:30am	Presque Isle Tournament (5:30am both mornings)
July	6	7:00pm	Monthly Meeting
August	22		Rogers City Tournament
September	14	7:00pm	Monthly Meeting
October	5	7:00pm	Monthly Meeting
December	14	7:00pm	Monthly Meeting

**2026 White River Steelheader's Calendar of Events**

Month	Date	Time	Event information
<b>Note:</b> All meetings will be held at 6:30 pm at the VFW, any changes in location will be decided a couple of days before the meeting. Any questions or to verify dates/times please call Clint Pollock at (231) 893-0210 or Terry Clark at (231) 893-6805.			
May	7	6:30 pm	Meeting - Montague VFW
June	4	6:30 pm	Meeting - Montague Boat Launch
July			No meeting
August	6	6:30 pm	Meeting - Montague Boat Launch
September	3	6:30 pm	Meeting - Montague VFW
October	1	6:30 pm	Meeting - Montague VFW
November	5	6:30 pm	Meeting - Montague VFW
December	3	6:30 pm	Meeting - Montague VFW

## MSSFA Board of Directors Meetings 2026



**June 24th**  
Via TEAMS -  
6:00pm

**October 21st**  
Via TEAMS -  
6:00pm

**August 19th**  
Via TEAMS -  
6:00pm

**December 16th**  
Via TEAMS  
6:00pm

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**"Fish Pass" Continued from page 12**

"Early Monday morning after the first rain event, two additional Team Elmer's crews were called to mitigate erosion that was jeopardizing an existing parking lot," says Kelenske. He says those efforts included installing additional earthen berms to divert the water away from the parking lot, stone armoring riverbank edges, and monitoring the site for signs of further erosion.

"Team Elmer's sent all their crews downtown," adds McCallum. "Spence Brothers was doing all-nighters. AECOM was the same," she says, noting all the organizations responded far in excess of what they were contractually obligated to do.

Bob Spence III of the construction firm Spence Brothers says they had people on-site around the clock. "We knew the river was up to begin with. We saw the weather report and as a precaution we had three on-site and two support people [working] all night."

McCallum says the first leak began at 8:03am. Crews were in place and ready to respond.

"The construction crew was in the hole and saw the start of the breach on the northwest corner," says Spence. "We had 15 minutes to get out of the hole and save the equipment."

They immediately alerted the subcontractors and brought in pumps. "We were on 24-hour [shifts] all week," he says.

Jason Plum of the design and engineering firm AECOM says while there was some loss of hand tools, they were able to remove the large equipment and no crew members were injured. The greatest losses were financial and in time, rather than any structural impact.

"We feel quite fortunate," says Plum. "Realisti-

cally there was no damage to the work. The new dam performed excellently. The new infrastructure made a dramatic difference."

**Dealing with the Aftermath**

While the floodwaters continue to recede and roads have been reopened, much remains to be done.

Though not its legal responsibility, the Grand Traverse Conservation District has long worked with volunteer groups to maintain the Boardman-Ottaway's cleanliness and navigability. "The Conservation District for decades has stepped up to take on the role of cleanups every spring," says Senior Conservation Steward Reb Ratliff.

The Conservation District will have its hands full this year. Ratliff says every section of the river has known blockages, as the flood swept along everything in its path. Not only trees, gravel, and silt, but everything from sheds and doghouses to lawnmowers, parts of cars, grills, and even huge propane tanks.

"Things that are dangerous, toxic," adds McCallum.

According to Ratliff, the first step is for crews with the Conservation District to open things up enough that others can assist. They will float the river and remove what they can, while photographing and GPS documenting areas and blockages that need further attention. "We'll see all sorts of stuff. Dock sections, lawn chairs, picnic tables," he says.

Some of those larger items will have to be hauled onshore to be disposed of. Fortunately, he says the organization has been doing this long enough that it has established relationships with those with homes and property along the Boardman River. "We'll get in there, haul it onshore, return, and pick it up with a truck."

Groups like the Traverse Area Paddle Club and Boardman River Clean Sweep and other volunteers will join the effort. "Everybody has expressed a willingness" to help, Ratliff notes.

But it won't be an overnight thing. "We're a couple weeks away. We're still in recovery mode," he says. His hope is that by the beginning of May, most of the river will be open to the public. Though complete cleanup will likely take all summer, the river is already recovering, though the flow has likely changed in places. "A river system is driven by change, with jams and scours," he says.

Repairs throughout the area are continuing. Crews hired by the city closed a portion of Lot A and the 100 block of E. Front Street alley between Cass Street and the J. Smith Walkway to repair a sinkhole resulting from the recent flooding event. Work began last Wednesday and will continue into this week, with intermittent closures expected.

Meanwhile, work on the FishPass is resuming. Team Elmer's says its FishPass crews are restarting construction after cleanup. That includes water being pumped down to the fish weir mud matt foundation and having crews power wash previously installed rebar prior to continuing construction. Kelenske says that physical soil erosion control measures like silt fence, turbidity curtain, or stone riprap will be reestablished as applicable.

"It's business as usual. We're back on track," says Spence, though not without impact. "We spent a lot of money and time."

"We are happy to see sunshine," concludes Kelenske. "You prepare with best practices, but Mother Nature ultimately has the final word."



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