



# THE GREAT LAKES SPORT FISHING NEWS

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

Volume 83

January/February 2024

No. 1



Largest tournament fish of 9.46 lbs was caught by Mark Radvonausky fishing with Jereme Curtis on Silver Bullet. Mark is on the right and Jereme is on the far left.

## The 34th Annual Southwest Michigan Steelheaders "Winter Challenge" River Tournament

By Ryan McCartney

The 34th Annual Southwest Michigan Steelheaders "Winter Challenge" River Tournament was once again held on the St. Joseph River on December 2nd. The weather was fantastic, with sunny skies and mild temperatures, which helped attract more than 70 fishermen. Fishing served to be a bit difficult for most, but we still had 44 steelhead hit the tournament scales.

Although you enter this particular tournament as an individual, your registered weights could play a key role in the Chapter

Challenge side of this tournament. The three biggest Steelhead caught by a Battle Creek Chapter member(s) are put against the three largest weighed-in by a S.W. Michigan Chapter member(s). A traveling trophy is then presented to the Chapter with the most weight, which was awarded to the S.W. Michigan Chapter this year, with a winning weight of 23.53# versus 19.24#. The largest steelhead of the tourna-

"Southwest"

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## New Fishing Decree Appealed

By Alan Campbell

An appeal has been filed seeking to overturn parts of a new Tribal fishing decree that detractors say would negatively impact fish populations in the parts of lakes Michigan, Huron and Superior that fall within the jurisdiction of 19th century treaties.

The new fishing order, which regulates the catches of commercial fishing operations belonging to members of five Native American tribes including the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, remains in effect for now. Its impacts, should there be any, won't be felt until spring with the expansion of gill netting into Grand Traverse Bay and an extra month of commercial fishing west of Leland prior to Memorial Day weekend.

Chater boat captain Tony Radjenovich of Leland township is president of the Coalition to Protect Michigan Resources, which filed a document signifying its intent to appeal. The actual appeal is not due

for several weeks.

"There just isn't enough fish to allow more gill netting," Radjenovich said. "We need to preserve the resource, and gill nets take all the fish. They are non-selective. I don't understand why a state of Michigan licensed commercial fisherman can't use them, but a tribal fisherman can."

In a press release, the coalition noted that gill netting was banned by the MDNR in 1970s after research concluded gill nets are non-selective with disastrous consequences for fishery populations.

Radjenovich said scraping together funds to file the appeal was no easy effort. The coalition's most notable member, Michigan United Conservation Clubs, is joined by fellow nonprofits the Michigan Steelhead and Salmon Fishermen's Association, Michigan Charter Boat Association, and Hammond Bay Area Anglers in financially supporting the effort.

"Decree"

Continued on page 17

## Luring Spring Steelies

By Jim Bedford

The fall run of steelhead was especially weak this past autumn, especially in Lake Michigan and Lake Huron tributaries. We can hope that their numbers will bounce back this spring, but I think that their numbers are just way down right now.

Steelhead are likely to be quite widely scattered

this winter and spring and artificial lures can attract fish from a farther distance than bait so can cover more water looking for them because you can move faster. Lures for steelhead can be grouped into three categories based on the way they are usually presented. High action plugs or crankbaits are usually held against the current; spinners and spoons are cast

and retrieved; and relatively weightless lures, beads or flies are drifted with the current. Of course, these offerings can also be presented in more than one way.

Casting weighted spinners is my favorite steelhead technique. They are a very versatile lure and can be presented at all angles with the current. While they cannot be retrieved di-

rectly against the current as they will rise to the surface, you can still back them down by giving line at a rate slower than the current to keep them deep and spinning. Spinners attract steelies both visibly and sonically from a considerably distance so they allow you to cover water fairly quickly. This is likely to be especially helpful in this spring if they are scarce and quite scattered. Take advantage and cover lots of water until you find fish.

While spinners work especially well in moving water, spoons are also good cast and retrieve lures. Both of these offerings are easy to get down to the correct depth and their flash really turns on the migratory rainbows. Silver is my first choice of finishes when the steelhead are holding deep because it reflects light best. Brass and copper are also effective and I frequently switch to them when the water is



Brett Hartford with winter steelhead

"Steelies"

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# New compound may expand sea lamprey control

By Ben Eiler  
greatlakesecho.org

A newly discovered chemical compound that makes it difficult for invasive sea lamprey to find their breeding grounds may be a new tool in the toolbox for controlling a parasite that threatens Great Lakes fish.

Anne Scott, an assistant professor at Michigan State University, and her team of researchers are creating a new method of sea lamprey control using a newly discovered chemical compound, petromyzonol tetrasulfate – also known as 3sPZS.

It is very similar to a pheromone that male sea lampreys release in rivers and streams before breeding. The natural pheromone attracts females ready to breed to the males' nests. But when 3sPZS is released into a river system, females can't find the nests and are unable to breed, Scott said.

A long process lies ahead for the researchers before this new method can be used. Efficacy tests, like those that prescription drugs must undergo and trial applications in diverse river systems are the next steps of this journey.

The tests are promising and the new compound seems both safe and effective, Scott said. It will nat-

urally break down in the water and due to its similarity to the naturally occurring pheromone, it only influences the invasive sea lamprey.

Sea lampreys are invasive parasitic eel-shaped fish that have been present within the Great Lakes for over 100 years. They latch on to the sides of fish with their suction cup-shaped mouth, pierce fish's skin with their tongue, and after secreting a blood-thinning enzyme, drain the fish's fluids. In the Great Lakes and surrounding water bodies, sea lampreys kill 40 to 60 percent of their hosts. This can translate to over 40 pounds of fish killed per lamprey.

### Old foe

"Sea lampreys have been present in Lake Ontario since the 1830s," said Marc Gaden, the deputy executive secretary of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission. It was not until 1921, after improvements to a canal that connected Lake Ontario to Lake Erie, that the lamprey began to spread uncontrollably, he said. "By 1939 there were sea lampreys in every lake."

Not long after their arrival, the lampreys had a massive effect on the Great Lakes fishing industry. At the height of their populations, between the 1950s

and 1960s, sea lampreys had reduced the annual pounds of fish caught in the lakes by 98 percent, Gaden said. This led to a huge effort to control the lamprey population by employing many different techniques.

Of these, the most effective has been the application of a lampricide, 3-trifluoromethyl-4-nitrophenol, also known as TFM. It is used to kill the lamprey larvae before they develop into adults and leave the rivers and streams where they hatched.

Scott describes TFM as "the cornerstone of the control program," but she says that it has limitations.

The lampricide requires a strong flow through the river, she said. If there are dams or pools in any place along the river, the chemical can get trapped, rendering the treatment ineffective. The treatment must be carefully applied to not have any effect on the native fish populations.

### Barrier strategy

Another management option is using natural or artificial barriers to restrict the lampreys from accessing their spawning ground and to reduce their spread into new water bodies. While barriers are quite effective, they may not be a permanent solution.

"There is a large push

throughout the Great Lakes and beyond to restore connectivity to our systems. In some areas, folks are advocating for removal of barriers," Scott said. This could lead to increased populations and spread of sea lamprey.

However, these two methods and others have helped managers reduce lamprey populations by an average of 95 percent in all the Great Lakes, Gaden said.

While this is a huge success, the work is far from over. The Great Lakes Fishery Commission and its partners spend around \$25 million each year on sea lamprey control to preserve a fishery that is worth over \$6 billion," Gaden said.

"I don't think that there's a control tactic that exists at this point that's a silver bullet," Scott said. However, the addition of 3sPZS will make it easier "to tailor some of our approaches to certain streams and especially make sure that we have tactics in place for those more problematic systems." Scott and her team will continue with their research of this new compound and of sea lampreys as a species.



Image: Anne Scott

Michigan State University assistant professor Anne Scott is testing a new method of controlling parasitic sea lampreys in northern Michigan streams.

## Slow And Steady Wins The Race

Even One That Takes 10 years To Move 45 Miles

By Reese Carlson  
greatlakesecho.org

The turtles had a long journey ahead.

They fought for 45 miles against the strong Kalamazoo River current. They left the river and walked up and over a dam blocking their path. They traversed water so shallow their shells likely stuck out of it. The destination? Their home 10 years earlier when the 2010 Kalamazoo River oil spill wiped it out.

In July 2010, one of the largest U.S. inland oil spills struck Michigan's Kalamazoo River. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimated the spill was upwards of 4.5 million gallons.

As part of a wildlife rescue, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services relocated more than 700 northern map turtles to similar habitats along the Kalamazoo River.

In the 10 years following the spill, researchers led by Joshua Otten, a research ecologist with the University of Toledo, studied the movements of the map turtles after being relocated. A recent study published in the journal Conservation Science and Practice details the initial emergency move and the turtles' subsequent movements for 10 years.

"The oil spill was a



Image: James Harding

An older juvenile northern map turtle rests on a log.

tragedy. But scientifically? It was an incredible opportunity to learn exactly how far these turtles will go," said Stephen Hamilton, an aquatic ecosystem ecologist and biogeochemist with Michigan State University's Kellogg Biological Station. "We had no idea how far freshwater turtles could travel."

The turtles used their homing instincts to find their way back to their nests. Otten and his team expected this possibility. What they did not expect was the turtles traveling almost 45 miles upstream.

"They will usually move a few miles from their home base, we knew that," Otten said. "We didn't have data to support movement at larger distances. We had moved them 30 or 40 miles away from where they had been captured and we found them at nearly the same log they had been captured at originally, 10 years prior."

The map turtles had

made it their personal mission to find their way back. It just took them 10 years to do it.

"Turtles have this homing ability which is really interesting," said James Harding, a longtime Michigan turtle researcher. "I suspect that odor plays a part in it, but who knows. They could be reading the stars as a guide. Turtles just have this ability that lets them find their way back home."

This study did more than just share turtle relocation statistics. It also shows that moving them can be successful.

Otten's study explains that translocated reptiles experience higher death rates when they are moved. It examines the components that made the relocation successful and can be used as a guide for moving reptiles during similar events,

"Race"

Continued on page 3

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# A New Roadmap to Addressing Toxic Algal Blooms in Lake

By Kendall Crawford  
www.ideastream.org

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recently approved a plan to reduce phosphorus and nitrogen in the Maumee River Watershed – one of the main drivers of persistent toxic algal blooms in Lake Erie.

Ohio, Michigan and Ontario pledged to reduce phosphorus inputs to Lake Erie by 40% by 2025.

The total maximum daily load, or TMDL, will help the large watershed in northwest Ohio get on a so-called “pollution diet.” The TMDL maps how nutrients are getting into the watershed that spans across 18 counties. The U.S. EPA hopes the plan will be just one tool of many.

“Addressing the problem of algal blooms in the western basin of Lake Erie will take all of us. It will take unflagging commitment and resolve. And it will take time,” said Debra Shore, EPA Region 5 administrator, in a statement.

The plan has garnered controversy. The Environmental Law and Policy Center and the Lucas County Commissioners both insist the plan doesn’t go far enough in its target goals to reduce phosphorus.

### What is a TMDL?

TMDLs are meant to be roadmaps to guide water quality efforts, said Christopher Winslow, Director of Ohio Sea Grant at Ohio State University College of Food, Ag and Environmental Sciences. According to

the Clean Water Act, states must develop these plans for waterways that are considered impaired, like the Maumee River watershed.

The plan maps how phosphorus and nitrogen are getting into the watershed, through point or non-point sources: Point sources come from a single identifiable source, like discharge pipes or drainage ditches. Non-point source pollutants result from land run-off.

“When it rains, the water moves off the edge of those rivers and streams and creeks and gets into the major river and then ultimately Lake Erie,” Winslow said.

Non-point sources make up the brunt of the pollutants, Winslow said. The Maumee River is surrounded by agricultural land, including more than 70 confined animal feeding operations, also known as factory farms, according to the TMDL plan. Fertilizer



Photo: Erin Gottsacker  
The Ohio Newsroom

A sunny day in Lake Erie. The lake has struggled with algal blooms, largely driven by nutrient pollution in the Maumee River watershed.

and manure can contribute large loads of phosphorus inputs.

“That isn’t, by itself, a finger point at ag, it is just we use the landscape for ag and the landscape contributes some of those nutrients,” he said.

### A Vital Waterway

The Maumee River Watershed is one of the largest waterways in the nation to receive a Total Maximum Daily Load plan.

The waterway has long been the center of water quality debates. The Ohio EPA developed the

roadmap due to a consent decree, after six years of legal battle with the Environmental Law and Policy Center. The two organizations butted heads on how to best protect the waterway under the Clean Water Act.

It’s received such attention because the river is a main driver of toxic algal blooms, which can harm other aquatic life. In 2014, the blooms made Toledo’s tap water unsafe to drink.

“In all the models and the forecasts and the things that scientists and agencies do to predict how large a bloom will be in Lake Erie, usually the driver or the indicator that bloom is the nutrients coming out of the Maumee River,” Winslow said.

### Moving Forward

Now that the TMDL has been approved by the U.S. EPA, Winslow said it’s up to state and local agencies to use it as a guidebook.

The TMDL is a set of recommendations that smaller municipalities can utilize to address the root of the problem.

“What can we do in our little tiny sub-portion of that bigger Maumee to reduce nutrient loss from here?” Winslow summed up.

Some of its recommendations include continuing to focus on soil management practices, wetland restoration and improving wastewater infrastructure. But, Winslow said the roadmap is subject to change, as the plan is meant to be a “living document.”

“Every year when we learn more and get new data, and we see certain efforts on the landscape, we can go back and say ‘Hey, we need to concentrate more here.’ ... So it is very much an adaptive document,” he said.

### “Race”

Continued from page 2

Otten said.

“The main issue with the translocation success stories is that they are often just completed translocations,” Otten said. “There are never these follow up studies to see if they survived, so we don’t actually know if some of them are truly successful. They might just appear successful because the animals were released into the wild again.”

Translocation events are tricky, especially with turtles and their homing instincts. They’ll attempt to find their way home and often wander into roads. Just because the animals are back in their habitat doesn’t mean the move is truly successful, Harding said.

The northern map turtle’s success and survival in the Kalamazoo River paves the way for more attempts of this nature. Now that there is data to back it up, regulations and guidelines can be made species specific in the case of another environmental disaster, Otten said.

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## Concerns About Michigan Steelhead Populations Prompt New Catch Limits

By Kelly House  
www.bridgemi.com

Anglers will be allowed to keep fewer steelhead trout in a handful of Michigan rivers, after state regulators tightened regulations over fears of population declines.

The Michigan Natural Resources Commission unanimously approved the change Thursday, after lengthy testimony from anglers who are divided on the issue. The changes will take effect April 1.

Under the new regulations, anglers on certain sections of the Carp, Betsie,

Manistee, Little Manistee, Muskegon, Rogue, Pere Marquette, Whitefish and White rivers, along with sections of Bear and Prairie creeks, will be allowed to keep just one steelhead a day. That's down from a previous limit of three-per-day in most cases.

The limits come af-

ter years of debate within the angling community and state government over whether steelhead populations are struggling and, if so, what to do about it.

"I think we need to take these steps now, in order to protect the situation while we find out what the answers are," Commission Chair Tom Baird said before Thursday's vote.

Scientists with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources opposed making changes, arguing that steelhead populations are stable and population growth is hindered not by anglers, but by environmental factors such as the invasive mussel takeover of the Great Lakes.

"These fish spend most of their life in the lakes," said Jay Wesley, the Lake Michigan Basin Coordinator for the DNR's Fisheries Division, "so the condition of the lake is what determines how many we have and how big they get."

The debate goes back years. Natural resources commissioners began considering changes after hearing concerns from some anglers, particularly fishing guides who say Michigan's reputation as a steelhead fishing destination is slipping because the fish are in decline. At one point, commissioners considered imposing a statewide one-a-day limit.

Steelhead are migratory rainbow trout native to the West Coast. The fish established wild populations in some Michigan watersheds after humans imported them decades ago. The state continues to stock some rivers with steelhead raised in hatcheries.

Born in rivers, steelhead spend most of their lives in the Great Lakes before returning inland to spawn. Averaging nine pounds and topping out at about 20, they're much larger

than river-dwelling trout. They're a popular sportfish known for putting up a fight when hooked and putting a lot of food on the table, making Michigan's fall and spring steelhead runs highly-anticipated fishing events.

Once abundant in lakes Michigan and Huron, their numbers dwindled in the early 2000s, when invasive mussels transformed the lakes' ecosystems. Mussels coat the lake bottoms in every Great Lake except Superior, filtering plankton and algae out of the water and robbing the lakes of nutrients that fish need to survive.

There are now an estimated two million steelhead in Lake Michigan. That figure has remained consistent in recent years, leading state scientists to conclude the population is stable.

But some anglers say they're noticing changes, from smaller fish to fewer bites on their lines. Growing threats from invasive species and climate change only add to the concern.

"The last five to seven years has been a continuing decline," said Ray Schmidt, a retired Manistee County fishing guide who said he has kept 20 years of stats.

Gaps in state data on steelhead populations helped fuel the debate, with anglers on both sides lamenting that Michigan doesn't spend more time and money tracking steelhead populations.

"We all need better data to make more confident decisions," said Bryan Burroughs, executive director of Michigan Trout Unlimited, which supports the catch limits. But he added: "We do see that there is reason to be concerned for steelhead."

Opponents joined DNR staff in arguing that further restricting catch-and-keep

fishing won't make a difference in the species' long-term survival.

"Overharvest of wild fish is not the problem," said Dennis Eade, executive director of the Michigan Steelhead and Salmon Fishermen's Association. "The problem is the cycle that we're in."

The state has repeatedly reduced steelhead catch limits since the 1990s in response to population declines.

In most of Michigan, the steelhead bag limit is three fish per day. But in 2021, the state reduced allowable catch in a handful of rivers to one daily during the spring spawning season. Thursday's year-round restriction in several rivers adds yet another change.

Wesley, of the DNR, said adult steelhead are "saturating" available spawning habitat, leading him to doubt that restricting fishing will boost reproduction.

If Michigan wants more steelhead, he said, it must either improve conditions in the Great Lakes — something that will be difficult with mussels dominating the ecosystem — or open up more spawning habitat in rivers by removing dams or improving habitat.

But as Bridge Michigan has reported, a DNR push to remove dams is hindered by a lack of funding and social pressure to maintain reservoirs that have become valued recreational lakes.

**Photo Top of Page: Steelhead are migratory rainbow trout, which spend most of their time in the Great Lakes (or the ocean, for those born in their native habitat) before returning to rivers to spawn.**

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**Dennis Eade, Executive Director**  
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## MSSFA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

### Dennis Eade



As 2023 comes to a close, it's time to reorganize for a renewed effort to preserve our sport fishery. Should the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals deny CPFR's appeal to overturn the results of the Consent Decree negotiations, we will need to hold the MDNR accountable for implementing the new consent decree in a manner that ensures tribal commercial fishermen do not over-harvest lake trout and endanger the sustainability of the fishery. In addition to this challenge, the legislature is considering a bill (HB 5108 - Jason Morgan (D) Ann Arbor) which would allow state-licensed commercial take of game fish, including lake trout, smallmouth bass, panfish, walleye, perch and other game fish. Here is where

we need to rally support for a bill to be sponsored by Rep. Amos O'Neal, (D) Saginaw and dropped after the legislature reconvenes in January that would update the commercial fishing statute to protect game fish species from commercial harvest.

To further complicate the ability to freely fish for our cold-water species, the Natural Resources Commission (NRC) approved an amendment to the fishing order to limit the bag limit on steelhead on many streams to one steelhead over 20 inches per trip. We argued at the commission meeting in November that over-harvest of steelhead is not the reason for fewer steelhead in the streams this fall but instead a result of the current climate cycle and fluctuating weather and

water levels. Regardless, the NRC decided to interdict and limit harvest because by doing so would do no harm to the fishery. Scientific evidence does not support lowering the limit to one fish for a select few that keep more than one steelhead. It is the guides that are pushing for this change. The more fish left in the stream and less kept by anglers means more fish for their clients to catch and release. Penalizing the tiny minority of anglers who keep more than one fish, which they pay to manage by the way, only results in lessening effort and finding fewer anglers willing to incur the expense of a trip hoping to put fresh fish on the table.

On a positive note, we were able to get the commercial guiding bills passed. Passage means significantly improving inland fishing data being collected which will inform future regulations.

Fishing for steelhead this fall and winter has been challenging to say the least. Not near the numbers of steelhead as we have seen

in past years and the ones that are brought to net are smaller. At a recent river tournament in St. Joseph, MI, forty-four steelhead were caught with an average weight of 4.70 lbs. Overall, the size of fish entered was smaller than usual and we believe it is a result of the pandemic year when the MDNR was unable to get out, missing a Steelhead egg take during Covid. There were only 6 fish taken over 7 lbs. The large majority of the fish taken were fin clipped as the St. Joe River relies heavily on stocking.

During 2023 we saw the retirement of Jim Dexter, Fisheries Chief and the promotion of Randy Claramunt as Chief. Dan Eichinger left the MDNR to take a post at Ferris State University and Gov. Whitmer appointed Scott Bowen as Director of the DNR. Scott has a long history of public service to Michigan. He served as the Commissioner of the Michigan Lottery from January 2008 to February 2017 making him the longest serving lottery director in state

history. He has shown to be a supportive leader, trusting his deputy and department heads to fulfill the mission of the department. Finally, Gov. Whitmer appointed Pete Eardley to fill the NRC Commissioner's vacancy created when Leslie Love left. Pete is founder of Cavallo, a company that designs platforms that elevate the way businesses do business. Both men are avid outdoorsmen with a keen interest in our hunting and fishing heritage.

So, the stage is set for a new year of challenges. We need to voice our concerns and work to protect

our resources. Removing obsolete dams and opening up miles of productive habitat for cold water species is going to be critical to MS-SFA's ongoing success for preserving sport fishing.



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5	08/14/24	09/03/24
6	10/11/24	11/04/24

**GREAT LAKES SPORT FISHING NEWS**

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*The Great Lakes Sport Fishing News (GLSFN) is the official publication of the Michigan Steelhead and Salmon Fishermen's Association (MSSFA). Subscription to th GLSFN is through membership in MSSFA. The GLSFN publishes six issues per year. Permission for reprint from this publication is normally permitted, unless otherwise stipulated by the article, and proper credit is given to the author and the publication. The GLSFN or MSSFA does not necessarily agree or support the contents of articles within this publication. The views expressed are those of the author(s) of the articles.*

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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*



# THE MICHIGAN STEELHEAD & SALMON FISHERMEN'S ASSOCIATION

**THE QUALITY OF FISHING REFLECTS THE QUALITY OF LIVING!**

MSSFA was incorporated in 1971 by a handful of individuals who knew that Michigan's newly formed trout and salmon fishery was something worth working to protect. They were a small group who wanted to not only protect their fishery, but learn how to catch their elusive prey and tell fishing stories.

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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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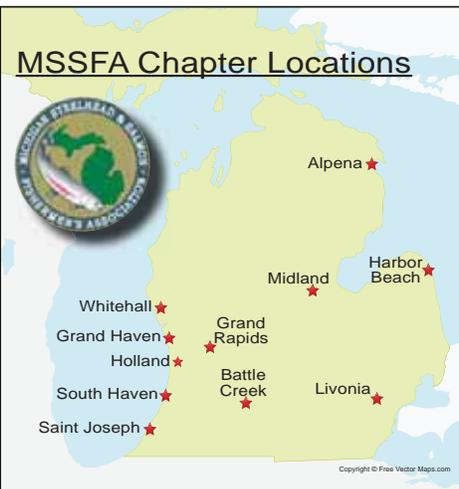
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“Southwest”

Continued from page 1

ment was recorded at 9.46# and caught by Mark Radvonausky who has been fishing this tournament for many years. The three winning steelhead that made up the SW Michigan Chapter total, weighed-in at 7.87 #, 7.84# and 7.82#, with the first two being weigh-in by Owen Lillich and the third by Winn Wolf. The three heaviest steelhead making up the Battle Creek total were caught by Joe Foy, Mike Decker and Bryan Pomeroy, with respective weights of 9.01#, 5.35# and 4.88#.

The coveted Walt Tober Memorial Award, which is named after a longtime, contributing member of the SW Club and presented to the SW Member catching the largest steelhead of the day, was awarded to Owen Lillich.

We would like to thank Tackle Haven, The Fishing Hole and Highs Marine for their sponsorship, On The River Tavern for their hospitality, the members that helped with this event and of course all of the participants.... see you all next year.

(Photos of winners, below)

# The Southwest Michigan Steelheaders



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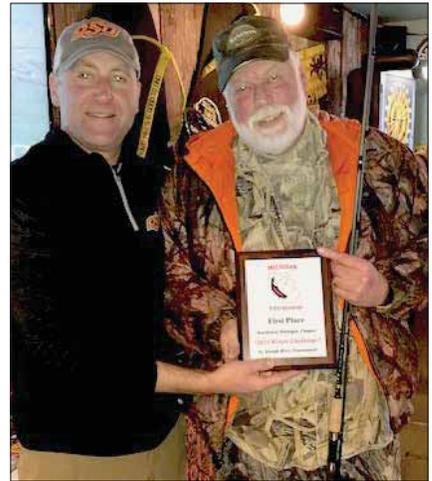




Above: Mark Radvonausky



Above: Ryan McCartney and Joe Foy



Above: Ryan McCartney and Mark Radvonausky

Below: Ryan McCartney and Owen Lillich

Below: Winn Wolf and Owen Lillich

Below: Joe Montella and Owen Lillich



# Why Steelhead?

By Roger Hinchcliff  
Steelhead Manifesto

## Why Steelhead?

Ask any avid Steelhead angler this question, and you may get different answers. One thing is for sure: they would all tell you when it comes to a river game species, it truly is the ultimate game fish. These fish are commonly called the grey or silver ghost of the river for a reason. The fish of a thousand casts. They will test any angler's patience; catching on some days can be challenging. One thing is for sure: these fish peel drag, and love to get acrobatic when you're

fighting them.

Here in the Great Lakes, we stock an abundant number of fish, and many rivers offer exceptional steelhead fishing. Most folks know or have heard of some of these famous rivers like the Manistee, Muskegon, or Grand. But many locals and savvy anglers know many tributaries get good fish numbers every year in the fall, winter and spring. We even get some summer run fish as well.

## The Word Angler

The word angler was originally a last name. The term means "fisherman" back in the 1500's. It derived from the word angel,



Author Roger Hinchcliff with a big steelie.



Nick Godwin with fish caught on the Grand River.

fishermen are anglers.

## Fall and Winter

In the Great Lakes, we have different seasons. Many outdoors people chase whitetails every fall. It's a religion around the Great Lakes. Some schools still close on opening day in many parts. But when the cold weather arrives, those tags get filled, and the freezer is full. That's when Steelhead is just starting to get active in many streams.

If you have the cold weather blues and want something to do, please consider the mighty Steelhead. Once these fish have bitten you, it's over. They, indeed, are magnificent creatures made by God. Not to mention if you have never been on the streams in the fall or winter. The scenery and serenity are memorable experiences and should be enjoyed. The outdoors is a special gift given to humans, and many have never experienced it.

Having said that, don't worry about too many folks around. Fewer anglers are on the river this time of year, offering an even more pleasurable experience. Now add the colors of a fall or winter steelhead. It doesn't get any better than that.

No worries about the cold weather, when you hook a steelhead and that drag starts peeling, you'll forget all about the chill in the air, the stresses at work or any concerns other than bringing this fish to net.

## Methods

Let's keep it simple without getting too deep into the weeds on this subject. It would be best to have a 9ft or more rod with a 3000 series reel and a bobber. Yes, that's right, a bobber. However, Steelhead anglers get crazy when you say bobber instead of float. Steelhead anglers like to call it Float Fishing.

The rigging is simple:

a float, some split shot to a swivel. After the swivel, add an 8lb fluorocarbon leader. From there, you have many options. A spawn sack, bead, and jig are the most popular options. Night crawlers, minnows, and wax worms are popular favorites to tip a jig with. Many also cast plugs and spinners to catch these fish. Bottom line is that you have many options to chase these fish and have some fun.

## Harvest

Most steelhead anglers release their quarry in the rivers. Some anglers will keep a few for the eggs from a female for bait. Many anglers like to cook steelhead in different ways. My personal favorites are Blackened on the grill or smoked. During the Holidays I will get in trouble if I don't bring my smoked fish dip to the party.

Nothing wrong with keeping a few fish to eat. Which makes chasing this fish super rewarding. At the same time, I strongly support the catch and release of these fish as well.

## Conclusion

The angling lifestyle is not for everyone. But those who pursue this fish on its rivers genuinely know the calm feeling you experience while on the stream and can make the most stressed-out person relax and forget any problems or worries. The stream and fish help isolate us from the pain and misery in this world.

The hunt for this fish isn't all puppies, rainbows and sunshine. Every outing can be a challenge to catch this wary adversary and is always an adventure. But nature's quietness and the joy experienced when the battle begins makes it all worth it.

Enjoy the Steelhead Journey and try to get better every day; life is good on the stream.

"fish with a hook," from the English word angel, which means "angle," and fish-hook.

Through the years, the word angler had many definitions: a person who fishes with hook and line, especially for pleasure, but many fish for the table and freezer too. Whether you call yourself a fisherman or angler, we can agree we all fish for fun. The sport of fishing is a lifelong journey and is a way of life for most 'til we can no longer get out on the stream because of frailty or death.

An angler will never know it all during his lifetime. It truly is a journey that will last a lifetime. Many anglers will fish for various fish species and settle on one as a favorite. One thing is for sure: I never met a person who caught a steelhead and said I never want to do that again. Have you?

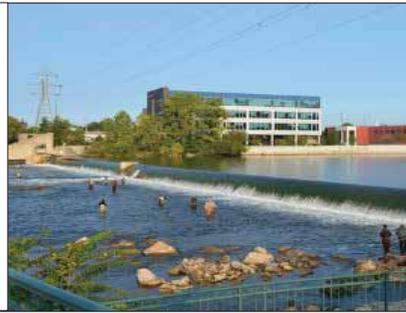
The word Angler means the same thing. All anglers are fishermen, but not all



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## Grand Rapids Steelheaders

By Rebecca Goettl

If you are picking up this paper from one of the many outdoor shows, please take a minute to look at the Chapter locations and their meeting dates. (Pages 18-19) Our chapters welcome non-members to our club meetings. And, our different chapters host a variety of speakers because we all have different tastes in how/where we fish based on our locations. Some chapters are

mainly Big Lake fishing, some are more river fishing based, and some chapters are a mix. So, keep an eye on their social media to see what they have coming up in their events! Better yet, attend a meeting and learn about a style of fishing you have never done! I guarantee you will be hooked...

Grand Rapids Chapter has been busy this year! We held many classes with Sacred Heart School, and covered a wide variety of lessons; from knot tying to

jigging to trolling to plain old bobber fishing. The students gleaned info from a Walleye guy, Big Lake Charter Captain, inland lake expert, and a shore river fisher. We covered a lot during their in-class sessions; the life cycle of fish, different species and their migration, invasive species and their life cycles, the health and management of our waters, to name a few. At the completion of the in-school sessions, the students had 2 days of hands

on fishing. Some of these young people had never picked up a pole or baited a hook. What an avid fisher takes as common place is a great achievement to a new fisher. Baiting a hook with a slimy, squiggly worm, or unhooking a fish with its sharp, spiky fins As an active club member, it is so great to see these young people as they accomplish these tasks. This is my 3rd year helping in this area of the club, and it has to be my favorite...

The GR Chapter also took some retired folks out fishing. Some were mobile of their own accord, and some had walkers, and some had wheels. A few obstacles, but nothing that couldn't be over-come! The members that assisted were treated to childhood stories and tales of fishing days long gone. As with the school students, some of the elders had never fished. That did not stop any of them!

## Doug Schultz: Lake Huron Basin Coordinator

On behalf of Fisheries Chief Randy Claramunt -

I am pleased to announce that Doug Schultz will be joining us as the new Lake Huron Basin Coordinator. Mr. Schultz has over 18 years of experience with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources including 12 years as an Area Fisheries Supervisor. In his previous position, Doug supervised over 10 employees, managed a complex budget, and collaborated on the assessment and management of multiple water bodies with tribal nations. Doug has a bachelor's degree from South Dakota State University and a master's degree from Southern Illinois University.

Doug has extensive experience in creating and managing teams including being Chair of the Walleye Technical Committee and serving on an interagency Cormorant Working Group which he will continue to do so but as Michigan's representative. Doug has extensive inter-jurisdictional fisheries management experience working with tribal nations, local units of government, and the public on complex aquatic resource issues involving large inland lakes in Minnesota. These experiences will be very applicable to the Lake Huron Basin Coordinator role for Michigan.

Doug will be starting with us on January 1, 2024, and will be working out of the Alpena Fisheries Research Station. Please join me in welcoming Doug and his family to Michigan!

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# New Season

## 6th Circuit Court of Appeals Receives Appellate Brief

The Coalition to Protect Michigan's Resources (CPMR) filed its principal appellate brief in the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit yesterday arguing against entry of the 2023 Great Lakes Consent Decree (2023 Decree).

The 2023 Decree was a negotiated settlement of four sovereign Michigan Tribes, the United States of America, and the State of Michigan. Judge Paul Maloney approved the 2023 Decree in August after considering CPMR's objections to the agreed-upon management framework.

In handing down his order, Judge Maloney rejected CPMR's claim that

biological harm is likely to happen to the Great Lakes fisheries due to the drastic increase in gillnet fishing in lakes Michigan, Huron, and Superior accompanied by significantly too high of target annual mortality rates for Lake Trout and Whitefish. Even more problematic, Judge Maloney failed to recognize the 2023 Decree does not contain proper measures to mitigate harm to the resource because of overfishing. This is especially concerning with the undisputed declining Whitefish stocks.

CPMR's appeal is available to the public and can be found on its website: [protectmiresources.com](http://protectmiresources.com)

The appeal focused on the District Court's disregarding of biological evidence that the 2023 Decree could irreparably harm the resource. CPMR presented expert witnesses and biological data showing that



Coalition To Protect Michigan Resources

the massive expansion of gillnets into new areas of the Great Lakes is unsustainable and will decimate local fisheries in Michigan.

The appeal raises several legal and fact-based questions about the District Court's decision. Chief among them, did the District Court abuse its discretion in approving the 2023 Decree when the management framework of the Decree is unenforceable, drastically expands gillnetting to the detriment of the Great Lakes fisheries, fails to require the parties to collect complete data, and sets target annual mortality rates significantly too high considering the biological status of the Great Lakes fisheries?

Through the appeal, CPMR argues that the District Court erred in its review of the 2023 De-

cre. The appeal is based on factual and legal issues, including vagueness of harvest limits, impact on the fishery, rehabilitation of Lake Trout and Whitefish, and inadequate information sharing. The other parties are due to file responses to the CPMR appeal by January 18, and then CPMR will get an opportunity to reply to those arguments by February 20.

Tony Radjenovich, President of the coalition, said that CPMR's focus has always been the health of the Great Lakes fishery.

"The sustainability of the Great Lakes fishery has always been our top priority," said Radjenovich. "Our position has been unwavering, the 2023 Great Lakes Consent Decree, as written, would cause potentially irreversible harm to the populations of vital sportfish

species. The Coalition has held the position for years that gillnets are indiscriminate, lethal, and dangerous for the fishery."

"For more than 40 years the Coalition's members have been a voice for the fishery," said Radjenovich. "Our resolve remains as strong now as ever, we will not lose sight of what is important, the health of the Great Lakes fishery. We are committed to exhausting every reasonable legal option we have to ensure the fishery is protected."

CPMR is comprised of the Michigan United Conservation Clubs, the Michigan Charter Boat Association, the Michigan Steelhead and Salmon Fishermen's Association, and Hammond Bay Area Anglers Association, accompanied by an assortment of angling and conservation-supporting members.

Since the coalition's inception, it has worked to ensure that recreation anglers' voices are represented during the Great Lakes Consent Decree negotiations. You can support the work of CPMR by donating here:



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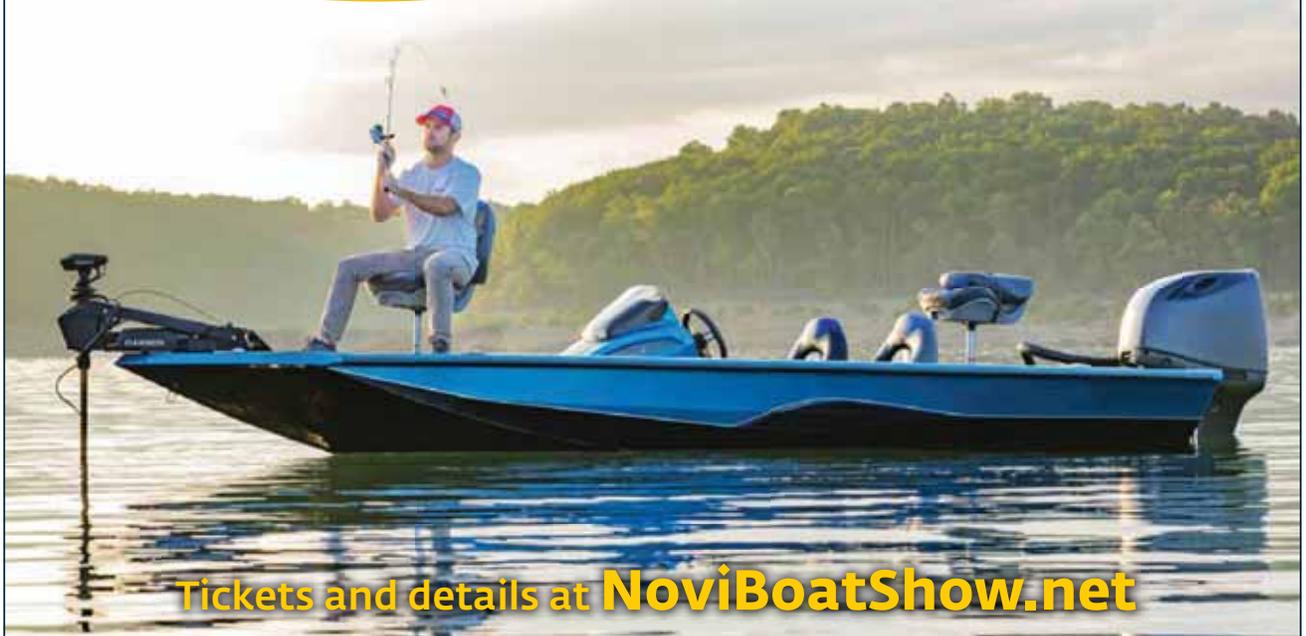
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**“Steelies”**

**Continued from page 1**

low and clear and the day is bright. Adding fluorescent orange, red, or chartreuse tape to the back of the spinner blade or spoon will make your lure even more irritating and thus irresistible to migrating steelhead.

These lures should be retrieved as slowly as possible, just fast enough to keep them spinning or wobbling. If you are casting upstream, you'll have to crank a little faster to keep the lures working properly. Conversely, if you are sweeping spinners or spoons across the current you might not have to turn the reel handle at all. Spinners with broad, flat French type blades are best because they spin well on slow retrieves. Likewise, highly curved spoons like the Little Cleo and BC Steel will wobble at fairly slow retrieve speeds.

Spinners and, to a somewhat lesser extent, spoons have a resistance that you feel when they are retrieved. That means the lure is working properly. A sensitive rod and smooth running reel enhance your ability to feel the lure working. If you don't sense resistance, the lure could be fouled or working improperly. Or, more often than you might think, the reason

Brad's Wigglers are all favorites for plug pullers. Many other high action bass or walleye crankbaits can also be effective but be sure that the hooks and split rings on them are strong enough. Choose light and bright colors to get the steelhead's attention as you invade their territory. Fluorescent chartreuse, orange, pink, and red are all excellent hues. Metallic finishes and contrasting colors are also great at getting the attention of a big ironhead. Copper has been hot in recent years and rattling plugs help the steelhead zero in when the water is stained or turbid.

You can also cast and retrieve these plugs for steelhead. Upstream casts are not very effective because of the difficulty of getting the floating lures down with the current but quartering downstream and then sweeping against the current can be very effective. Casting the plugs can help you get them into tight spots in the cover that would be difficult to reach with a boat.

In recent years, minnow plugs or stick baits have been very successful in catching steelhead. They are also best fished against or quartering against the current. They may be appealing to the feeding in-

tom bouncing techniques, the vast majority of Great Lakes anglers are now using floats.

Except for jigs, most drift lures are either buoyant or have little weight of their own. Therefore some weight must be added. For bottom bouncing anglers usually employ a two way swivel and attach their mainline to one loop and a leader of two to four pound lighter material in test to the other loop. Leaving a long tag end to the leader know enables you to attach split shot or hollow pencil lead to it. The weight needs to be heavy enough to keep your offering near the bottom but not so heavy as to drag and snag frequently. You are much better off to be a little high in the water column than to be snagging up all the time.

Float anglers also need to add weight unless using a jig. Small split shot spread out in a pattern on the leader are usually employed. Keeping your offering suspended a foot or two above the bottom will be most effective as steelhead look forward and up. If the surface current is not riffled or choppy you can enhance the effectiveness of your offering, especially marabout dressed jigs by jiggling your bobber with your rod.



Pete Schantz with early spring steelhead

of your line will allow you to quickly change lures to match the holding water. Cutting and retying takes time and is a bother and you probably won't bother even though you know a different spinner or plug would be better for the situation at hand. If you pre-tie some leaders and floats you can even switch from casting lures to drift fishing.

Remember that steelhead need cover on their river migrations, and while they orient to current, they also need to be able to rest. You can think of cover as anything that keeps the fish hidden from view. The simplest cover is water depth.

The clearer the water, the deeper the hole must be to provide protection. A riffled surface helps hide the fish and allows them to lie in shallower water.

Boulders, submerged logs, and clay or rock shelves or ledges provide both cover and serve to break the current for migrating steelhead. Steelies will usually lie quite close to these obstacles. A billed cap and polarized sunglasses are essential for success, both to see the cover structure and possibly the fish.

If you are not ready to trade in your spawn sacs for something artificial, you can still employ hard-

ware as an aid. Casting spinners or pulling plugs will help you find scattered fish, and once a concentration is located, you can drift the holes with eggs. Conversely, if you are drifting a run with bait that you know holds steelhead but they are not taking, you can use hardware as a change of pace. The flashing lure might also agitate them into changing position and becoming more receptive to your eggs or beads. Finally, adding yarn or a bright drift lure above your hook will make your spawn bag more visible to the fish and may excite them into taking it.



Author Jim Bedford with steelhead

could also be that a steelhead has softly inhaled the lure. When in doubt, set the hook.

High action, compact plugs or crankbaits are traditionally backed downstream at a rate slower than the current speed. This can be accomplished from an anchored boat or a drift boat that is rowed to keep the craft moving slower than the current. Wading anglers can also drop back plugs when they can wade in above the holding water.

Hotshots, Wiggle-worts, Kwickfish, Flatfish, Mag Lips, Hot-n-Tots, and

instincts of the steelhead but I am guessing the rainbows don't like other fish, even small ones in their space. These plugs seem to become especially effective as spawning time approaches, perhaps because steelhead don't like other fish to be around when they start laying eggs.

Drifted lures such as flies, jigs, beads and light, often buoyant drift "lures" also work well for spring steelhead. With this group we are using the river's current to deliver our offering. While some anglers still stick with traditional bot-

There are large numbers of commercial drift lures available. You can also tie your own flies, jigs, and yarn balls. Bright colors continue to be best and two contrasting colors are even better. Don't forget you can also cast flies and other weightless drift lures with conventional fly tackle. Cast your fly a bit upstream from where you suspect the steelhead to lie and allow it to sink. Twitch the fly to make it appear alive as it sweeps through the holding water.

Utilizing a small, black duo-lock snap on the end

# Tough Times For Steelhead

By Jim Bedford

Times are tough for the steelhead in Lakes Michigan and Huron and they may get tougher. Invasive quagga mussels now carpet the bottoms of both lakes and their filter feeding has greatly reduced the plankton levels. This in turn has reduced the availability of food for alewives, the primary forage for the lakes' salmon and trout. Steelhead runs this past fall were greatly reduced despite ample rainfall. Angling pressure on the tributaries was reduced and so was the catch. River anglers noticed and they reduced their harvest of their precious steelhead. In fact, many anglers noted the reduced numbers of steelhead and voluntarily released all the steelhead they were catching. On the streams I was wading I didn't encounter a single angler with a steelhead on a stringer over the past three years.

Initially a reduction of the limit on steelhead to one fish in tributaries was passed by the Natural Resources Commission for select streams in the spring only. This past fall the NRC proposed expanding the reduction to more rivers and year around. This reduction was passed unanimously at their meeting in



Paul Vogel with fall steelhead.

November. It was opposed by the DNR, Michigan Sea Grant, MUCC, and MSSFA. Their main argument was there was not enough scientific information to make such a move. Despite

being a life member of MSSFA, I was strongly in favor of the limit reduction and was joined by Michigan Trout Unlimited and the vast majority of the anglers and guides at the meeting.

steelhead they bring to net.

Last year I wrote an article on "selective release" for the show edition of The Great Lakes Fishing News, the "newsletter" of the Michigan Steelhead and Salmon Fisherman's Association, and steelhead were a major component of the article. Steelhead are not actively feeding on their spawning run so they rarely take our offerings deep. The water temperatures are usually quite cool and with care steelhead can easily be successfully released. Use tackle that can subdue them in a reasonable amount of time and utilize a good-sized net to land them. Keep the net bag and fish in the water and use the net as a corral while you unhook the steelhead with your forceps or needle nose pliers.

Male steelhead can and often do spawn with several female steelhead. Small male steelhead are often chased off the redds by the large, dominant males and are usually not important to overall successful spawning. Additionally, they are often the firmest, best tasting steelhead for the grill or



Releasing fall steelhead

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As a Ph.D scientist I could understand the possible lack of data but as a long time catch and release steelhead angler I felt the need to invoke some "social science" and to speak for the fish. In Michigan steelhead are considered an elite sport fish, maybe the elite sport fish and the reduced limit sends the message that their numbers are way down and need our help.

In addition to the food chain problems, we also have the dark cloud of Indian gill nets in the north-

ern parts of Lake Michigan and Lake Huron next year with the new Consent Decree. This is another reason for being careful not to over-harvest our precious steelhead.

Michigan is a destination state for midwestern steelhead anglers. They come because of our rivers and our good numbers of wild steelhead. It is important to note that many anglers travel to British Columbia and Alaska and spend lots of money to catch and release all of the

smoker. This is especially true when they are caught in the fall or winter before spawning commences.

Fishing for steelhead with lures is a good plan when these fish are scarce as they attract fish from a considerable distance. A revised version of an article on this tactic is also in this issue of the Great Lakes Sport Fishing News.

# Ludington Tournament Anticipating Payout Total Over \$110,000

Event Registration Opens April 1

Ludington boasts one of the best salmon fishing ports on the Great Lakes, which is why this stop on the Lake Michigan tournament trail continues to be a raving success.

Not only is the fishing first-class, but the Ludington Offshore Classic also pays out big cash prizes – causing hundreds of anglers to flock to Ludington every summer to get a taste of the week-long competition. The 2024 tournament will be held July 15-21.

In 2023, gorgeous weather on the big lake made for a successful tournament week in July. Only one day saw a delay for the ladies due to a short-lived thunderstorm.

Big Boys contest winner, Flat Out, took home the top prize of \$22,400 after defeating 31 other boats in contention. Captain David Baker and his five-member crew earned 453.25 points in the two-day event.

“Our strategy was to catch our 12 fish each day,” Baker said. “We focused more on lake trout north of Manistee and salmon off Big (Sable) Point. We had some nice-sized trout, which is probably why we won. It’s kind of the luck of the draw – but we found something the trout liked.”

He credits Dreamweaver for the lures and products they used during the Big Boys event, adding that he likes the challenge of fishing the Ludington tournament.

The second-place team in the 2023 Big Boys tournament was OFishL Business, who took home a prize of \$6,400, and third place went to Elsie-K receiving \$3,200. Lori Ann II brought in the largest fish of the tournament at 26.6 pounds.

The weekend’s pro tournament saw SlipKnot taking away the \$20,000 top prize. Its crew had two days of spectacular fishing during the event, bringing in the 12-fish limit on Day 1 and 11 fish on Day 2, weighing a whopping total of 290.7 pounds.

SlipKnot captain, Lenny Vaughan, said he and co-captain, Mark Chmura, fished north of Big Sable Point on both days.

“The second day was a little bit more of a challenge for us,” he said. “We ended up catching 13 fish but only 11 for the tournament. The Ludington Offshore Classic is a tough tournament due to having to catch two species to complete your tournament limit.”

“This was my second appearance at the Ludington Offshore tournament,” he added. “The Ludington Offshore tournament is the biggest and best on Lake Michigan. To have won it this year really puts me in the company of some of the best salmon fishermen of all time. I’ll be back next year to try to win it again.”

Other winners of the pro tournament were EZ Limits, second place, awarded a \$8,000 prize; and Pure Chaos, third place, awarded \$5,000. Underdog was the Big Fish winner with a 27.7-pound fish and was awarded \$3,000, while the Top Am Winner was Offline with \$8,000 in winnings.

Throughout the week-long Ludington Offshore Classic, there are contests for pros, amateurs, ladies and youth. These events, supported by Ludington-area businesses, will return for 2024 and feature public weigh-ins at Waterfront Park and crowds that rival other communities on the tournament trail.

“We’ve heard again and again that Ludington is the favorite stop,” said Brandy Miller, president/CEO of the Chamber Alliance of Mason County, who puts

on the event. “While this tournament requires a lot of planning and effort on the part of our committee and volunteers, this is always a feel-good event that brings people back to Ludington to enjoy all of the natural resources and amenities that we have here.”

To register for the 2024 tournament, visit [ludingtontournament.com](http://ludingtontournament.com).

## 2024 Schedule of Events:

- July 15: Big Boys captains meeting
- July 16-17: Big Boys Tournament
- July 18: Ludington Legends Memorial Tournament
- July 19: Ladies and Youth
- July 20-21: Pro/Am Ludington Offshore Classic

# An Invitation to the



The Metro-West Steelheaders (MWS) is a 170+ member "Family Fun" oriented fishing club. MWS goal is to promote sport-fishing, sharing of fishing information to those wanting to learn and educate young people through participation in fishing events throughout the Great Lakes region. MWS is one of eleven Michigan Steelhead & Salmon Fisherman's Association (MSSFA) chapters across the state.

MWS has something for everyone's interest in fishing, socializing, environmental education, community outreach, & fund raising. MWS holds roughly sixty (60) events a year ranging from fishing rivers, inland lakes, and the great lakes, including piers/beaches. In addition to fishing, we have several community outreach events and most important the opportunity to meet fellow anglers in person at one of

our ten (10) monthly meetings. The general meetings are open to the public with expert speakers related to fishing topics as well as MDNR officials and biologists.

MWS is active representing MSSFA on the MDNR Cold Water Steering committee and participates in Michigan United Conservation Clubs

(MUCC) Policy Board meetings and serves on the MUCC Fisheries Committee as well as serving on the MDNR Lake Michigan & Lake Erie Citizens Fishery Advisory Committees. MWS also participates with MUCC and other conservation groups in two annual river clean ups on the Clinton and Manistee Rivers

MWS sponsors an annual "Kids Fish" at Kensington Metro-Park for 100 kids. Each child receives a new pre-rigged fishing rod, bait and instruction by MWS volunteers throughout the morning. MWS also supports numerous "Salmon-in-the-Classroom" projects by providing equipment and support for the schools.



Member Gary Towns teaching at our Kids Outing.

Other fun activities include "Captain & Crew" contests as well as River, Kayak, Small Boat, Beach and Pier "Anglers of the Year" contests. There also are "Big Fish" and "Warm Water Challenge" annual fishing contests.

MWS Fundraisers support sending area children to the MUCC Kids Camp, the Annual Kids Fish at Kensington Metro Park, (6) classrooms in the MDNR "Salmon-in-the-Classroom" program & donations to fisheries related special programs like the "Clinton River Watershed Council" and the Lake Superior State University Atlantic Salmon project.

MWS is always looking for new members and always welcomes anyone interested in fishing or learning more about sport-fishing. Please feel free to join us at one of the general meetings on the first Tuesday of each month at 7:00 P.M. Meetings are currently held at the Livonia Senior Center located at 15218 Farmington Rd, MI, 48154.

For more information visit the MWS Website at [www.metroweststeelheaders.org](http://www.metroweststeelheaders.org) or contact Henry Nabors - Membership at [hnnabors@gmail.com](mailto:hnnabors@gmail.com) or call (248.225.4964).



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**Pro/Am Fishing Tournament**

**August 9th-11th 2024**

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- To contact us:**
- John Watson at [1137watson@gmail.com](mailto:1137watson@gmail.com)**
- Or Call Tournament Director at 616-218-6686
- For Dock Space contact:**
- Sergeant Marina at 269-857-2873
- Dave Engel at 616-218-4812
- Tom Earley at 269-207-1095

- ★ \$10,000 First Prize Pro Division - based on 20 entries
- ★ \$4,000 First Prize Am Division - based on 30 entries
- ★ Reserve your slip early
- ★ 2024 Friday Night Check In - Spectators Restaurant 5:00-7:00pm, Food Provided
- ★ Captains Meeting at 7:00pm
- ★ August 10th - 11th Free Hamburgers and Hot Dogs at Weigh-in and Awards Ceremony
- All Provided by Coral Gables Restaurant**



Manistee 30 lbs King, Eric Braden



Sara Ann Captain Kirk Traver at Benton Harbor



Bounty Hunter Captain Bob Schulz - President MWS

**“Decree”**  
Continued from page 1

“The coalition met with all of its supporters, and we explained to them what

we thought was lacking in the judge’s order. We said we need to set the record straight. Biological information was the most obvious mistake, and it wasn’t

allowed in the order,” Radjenovich said.

Charter fisherman Bill Winowiecki, who hails from Cedar, is president of the Michigan Charter Boat

Association and holds a seat on CPMR board. He said U.S. District Court judge Paul Maloney left open the opportunity for the Coalition to appeal, an

option that was not available in 2000 when the previous decree was approved. CPMR, whose motion to have a seat at the negotiating table was denied by Maloney, has been participating as a friend of the court.

“The money was tough to scrape up. All the major groups involved are out of money. But we didn’t have a choice. Our legal team said (the opportunity to appeal) has never happened in all the years of the decree,” Winowiecki said.

Also noticing the change of precedence was the Department of the Interior, a participating member of the negotiations. A day after the Coalition motioned to appeal the decree, the Interior Department filed an appeal to have that portion of Maloney’s decision stricken. Notably, neither the coalition nor the Department of Interior sought an order delaying

implementation of the decree.

Centerville Township attorney Bill Rastetter has represented the Grand Travers Band in negotiations over Tribal fishing rights for more than four decades. He did not comment for this story on the appeals. In past interviews he has stated that the new decree, which was given a life-span of 23 years, leaves in place harvest quota percentages essentially dividing commercial fish stocks evenly between state-licensed and Tribal fishers.

The decree approved by Maloney is the third following a landmark decision in 1979 by Federal Judge Noel Fox validating two 19th Century treaties that ceded land essential for Michigan to attain statehood. Among money and other guarantees granted the tribes was the right to fish treaty waters in parts of the Great Lakes.

# 5 Ways To Catch More Fish In The Winter

Anonymous Guest Writer at: [tforods.com/five-ways-catch-fish-winter/](http://tforods.com/five-ways-catch-fish-winter/)

Not many people fish in January and February, so chances are you will get your favorite spots all to yourself! Here are few tips to make the best of those colder days on the water.

**Safety** Wear neoprene waders. Gloves and a good thermal cap are essential. Layer up, if possible. It’s better to feel like the Michelin man than to freeze. Use a wading staff, if needed. No one wants to fall in the water. It’s uncomfortable in the summer; it’s potentially life-threatening in the winter.

**Stay upright.** And even if you stay dry, make sure to take breaks to stay warm. Drink a cup of coffee or crank up the heat in your vehicle.

**Pick the right water.** Tailwaters are the obvious option in the winter simply because of the constant water temperature. Trout, for instance, like water temperatures in the 50s. You won’t find that water that warm in the winter — unless it’s a tailwater fishery.

**Sleep in.** There’s no need to get up at the crack of dawn. I fish late morning until late afternoon. Sometimes, I go after lunch, when sun is up high enough to warm the water. This schedule applies to freshwater and salt.

**Slow down.** I typically fish too fast. My personality dictates more is better, particularly if the fishing is slow. This is the wrong approach in winter fishing. You need to slow down. Slow movements. Slow casts. Slow strips. Slow retrieves. As the winter water temperature increases, a fish’s metabolism increases. Decreasing water temperature makes fish lethargic. To compensate, make accurate casts and slow down.

**Use a thermometer.** The air temperature is important for personal safety. The water temperature dictates whether the fish will feed. Trout generally like temperatures in the 50s. Largemouth bass, on the other hand, prefer temperatures in the mid-60s and 70s. Temperature, of course, is only one factor in winter fishing success. But the important thing is to get out and enjoy winter fishing. Trust me, it’s worth braving the cold.

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- Star of the Lake Friday 5 Challenge
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Questions: Chad Bard 269-214-6934





Ryan Minton Photography

Battle Creek Steelheader s Calendar of E ents			
Month	Date	E ent	ocation
February		St. Joe River outh uest	Boat Ramp
March		St. Joe River Chapter Challenge	n the River avern
March		alama oo River Spring Steelhead	Allegan am
May		Lake Michigan Spring ournament	Benton Harbor SH
June		Connie McGo an invitational	Lake rie BBC
July		Portage Lake Panfish / Family Picnic	ortage Lake
August		Lake Michigan Memorial	South Haven
August		Veterans uting	South Haven
ctober		alama oo River Salmon Siam	Allegan am
ovember		alama oon River outh uest	Allegan am
ovember		alama oo River Memorial	Allegan am
ovember		St. Joe River Fall Steelhead	Boat Ramp
ecember		St. Joe River Chapter Challenge	n the River avern
ecemeber		Christmas arty	alama oo agles

Meetings are held e ery rd Tuesday of the month pm Social, pm Meeting  
 Meeting ocation Tra elers Cafe and ub, ortage Rd Exit off  
 Ri er Tournament oe Foy at lake Tournament Dan Foster at  
 battlecreeksteelheaders.com

Grand Haven Steelheader s Calendar of E ents			
Month	Date	E ent	Contact info
April	4	Spring Meeting	
May 30 - June 2		Memorial Tournament and GH Offshore	
TBD		GH/GR Chapter Challenge	
August 2-15		Weeklong Plus Contest	
August 15		Picnic	
September 7		Sportsman For Youth	
TBD		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

Grand Rapids Steelheader s Calendar of E ents			
Month	Date	E ent	nformation
January	2	ce Fishing Outing	Wabasis lake STC
January	2	Chapter Meeting	
February	2	Chapter Meeting	
March	7-10	Outdoor Sporst Show	De os Place Grand Rapids
March	15-17	Spring Fishing Outing STC	
March	25	Chapter Meeting	
April	1	pdate of GRSH Membership	Pay dues at meeting
April	2	Chapter Meeting	
May	20	Chapter Meeting	
June	-	Summer Fishing Event	Wabasis lake STC
June	15	ake Erie Walleye Contest STC	
June	24	Chapter Meeting	
July		Chapter Family Picnic	Johnson Park
August	3	Fall Big lake Outing STC	
August		Chapter Challenge / Double D Event	stay tuned for dates
August	2	Members Meeting	
September	14	Sportsman For Youth	Muskegon
September	30	Members Meeting	
October	1	Chapter Sponsored Buck Contest	
October	2	Fall River Contest STC	
October	2	Chapter Meeting	
ovember	3	Fishing Partners Manistee Contest	
ovember	25	Chapter Meeting	
December		Christmas Party	Watch for details

**\*\* Fishing Outings are subject to change based on weather conditions\*\***

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  
**\*\* Fishing Outings are subject to change based on weather conditions\*\***

**New address:**  
 P.O. Box 74450  
 Grand Rapids, MI 49514

Great Lakes Bay Region Steelheader s Calendar of E ents			
Month	Date	E ent	
January	27	Caseville - ce Fishing - lake Trout Walleye	
February	17	inwood - ce Fishing Statewide	
April	13	Manistee - Salmon / lake Trout	
April	27	State wide - Take Pictures	
May	4	inwood Beach - Walleye	
May	1	inwood Beach - Walleye	
June	1	Sebawang - Walleye	
June	15	Sebawang - Walleye id s Day	
June	2	inwood Beach - Walleye	
July	13	Manistee - Salmon	
July	27	udington - Salmon	
August	10	udington - Salmon 2 Day	

Great Lakes Bay Region continued			
Month	Date	E ent	
August	24	Manistee - Salmon 2 Day	
September	7	Manistee / Frankfort - Salmon T.B.D.	
December	14	Ban uet .F.W. Midland	

Membership meetings are the first Tuesday every month (no meeting in August)  
 Meetings held at 3013 Bay City Road Midland M 4 42 Phone -4 -3410

Board meetings begin at 7 00pm. lease call the ort Chairman no later than Monday prior to the outing ether  
 you plan on attending or not attending On the day of the outing call in on Marine Radio Channel 72.

Weigh-in follows each outing. Picnics follows weigh-in on Saturdays only.  
 Outings All Steelheader members pay 5.00. All non-Steelheaders pay 10.00 to participate.  
 Children 1 and nder are free. Picnic is 5.00 for everyone.

If interested in fishing with us please contact: Gary Decker at 989-859-7472  
 isit our web page www.steel-headers.com

Holland Steelheader s Calendar of E ents			
Month	Date	E ent	
January		Board Meeting	
February		Board Meeting	
February	22	Ban uet	
March	12	Board Meeting	
April	2	Board Meeting	
April	1	Membership	
May	7	Board Meeting	
May	1	Spring Challenge	
May	21	eague Start	
June	3	Board Meeting	
June		All Species/BMM	
June	2	ids ings	
July	1	Board Meeting	
July	25	Membership	
July	27	Summer Challenge	
August	5	Board Meeting	
August	24	adies Tournament	
August	27	eague End	
September		Board Meeting	
September	10	eague Dinner	
October	1	Board Meeting	
ovember	5	Board Meeting	
December	3	Board Meeting	
Decmeber	5	Membership	

Board meetings held at TBD ocations  
 General Membership Baysshore 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 an Brocklin 1 -240-7017  
 or email Brad Stephenson at  
 brad.stephenson32@gmail.com

Metro est i onia Steelheader s Calendar of E ents			
Month	Date	E ent	Chair ocation
January	2	o General Membership Meeting	
January	11-14	limate Sports Fishing Show Showplace	ovi - Marc / elith Traver
January	1	Comedy Club Fund Raising Event	aren Westphal
January	20	ake St. Clair ce Fishing Outing	Adam Trenz
February	3	Manistee River / ce Fishing	Adam Trenz
February		General Membership Meeting	
February	22-25	O TDOOR-RAMA Showplace	ovi - Gale Frazee / Sharon Bledsoe
March	5	General Membership Meeting	
March	23	M Steelhead Challenge Manistee River / Pier	Adam Trenz / Eric Braden
April	2	General Membership Meeting - Swap Meet / Awards	
April	13	Clinton Rier Clean p	Jay abban
April	13	Brown Trout Tournament	udington - Dave Zawacki
April	20	J. Robertson Memorial Walleye Tour - Detroit R / Erie - Robert Grech / Christ Christoph	
April	27	. Huron e ington Tournament	Bob Schulz
April	2	. Huron e ington Tournament	March Traver
May	7	General Membership Meeting	
May	11	ake Erie Walleye Tournament	Bob Schulz
May	1	Pt. Mouille ayak/ SB SM Bass/Walleye	elith Childs
May	1	Howard Tanner Salmon Tournament	Benton Harbor Saturday Chris Thompson / Dennis elley
May	1	Howard Tanner Salmon Tournament	Benton Harbor Sunday Mark Platt / Dennis elley
May	25	Bruin lake ayak / Small Boat	Chuck Davis
May	2	Carp Bow Hunting Event	Gale Frazee
June	1	ids Fishing Outing at ensington Park	TBD
June	1	Sterling SP Walleye Tournament	Fabian Sepulveda
June	4	General Membership Meeting	
June		Cristal Waters ayak / SB / Shore Fishing	Eric Braden
June	15	Cornwall Flooding ayak / Small Boat	Eric Braden
June	22	ake Erie Walleye Tournament	Bob Schulz / Dennis elley
June	23	ake Erie Walleye Tournament	Fabian Sepulveda
July		Club Summer Picnic	Mark Platt/Dave Zawacki
July	11	Erieau Tournament Thursday	Erieau Canada Clyde Schoen/C Christoph
July	13	Erieau Tournament Friday	Erieau Canada Henry abors/Ron Bellemore
July	13	Manistee River Cleanup Day @High Bridge	Roger Hinchcliff
July	25	udington Salmon Tournament - Thursday	Gale Frazee / Tom Abdelnour
July	27	udington Salmon Tournament - Saturday	Dave im Zawacki
July	2	udington Salmon Tournament - Sunday	M Traver
August		General Membership Meeting	

Metro est continued			
Month	Date	Event	Chair location
August	10	Salmon Tournament - Saturday	Manistee - Henry abors / Dave Hulton
August	11	Salmon Tournament - Sunday	Manistee - Marc / irk Traver
August	17	ake Tournament	Frankfort - Robert Grech / C Cristoph
August	1	Salmon Tournament	Frankfort - Bill Dodge / C Cristoph
August	24	PM ake ayak / Small Boat	Eric Braden
September	3	General Membership Meeting	
September	7	Manistee ayak / SB Pier Tournaments	Eric Braden
September	2	Manistee River Tournaments	Fabian Sepulveda
September	2	Muskegon ake Salmon Campout ayak / SB	elth Childs
October	1	General Membership Meeting	
October	12	ake Erie Perch Outing	Dave Zawacki
October	1	Captain/Crew/River Angler 2023 Calendar Mtg	elley/Trenz/ abors/Zawacki
October	1	udington Pier / Beach Event	Eric Braden
ovember	2	Manistee River/Pier/Shore Tournaments w DS	Zawacki/Braden/Trenz
ovember	12	General Membership Meeting - 2nd Tues.	Election Day Room at Senior Center 5
ovember	30	Ohio Walleye Tournament	Dave Zawacki
December	3	CHR STMAS PARTY - HAPPY HO DAYS	
December	7	PM River Tournament	Marc Traver / Adam Trenz
December	14	Huron River Tournament	Roger Hinchcliff

MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC  
 7:00 PM at The Ionia Seniors Center at the Southeast Corner of Farmington Road and Five Mile Road  
 WEB Site Go to www.metroweststeelheaders.org  
 If you have questions contact Metro West Steelheaders, Ionia MI  
 Contact President Bob Schulz bobschulz7@gmail.com 248-15-0043  
 Membership Director Henry abors 248-225-4144

South Haven Steelheaders Calendar of Events	
Month	Date Event
Note: SH Steelheaders SHS Chapter Events in Bold * = Not Confirmed	
February	Russ Comroy Memorial Ice Fishing Tourney - Location based on ice conditions
February	Michigan Free Fishing Weekend
February	South Haven Steelheaders Tacklepalooza Saturday Meet American Legion Post
March	Ultimate Sport Show - Evos Race Grand Rapids
March	Fishing Seminar - South Haven American Legion Post
April	ake Michigan Fisheries Workshop - South Haven American Legion Post
May	Hori on Bank ake Coho Classic - Michigan City
May	St. Joe Tourney - SW Chapter
May	South Haven - 10 Am Tournament Captains Registration - American Legion Post
May	South Haven - 10 Am Tournament
May	Merle Morris Tournament - River Bend Boat Club
June	South Haven Steelheaders Harbor Light Brewery Ladies Tournament
June	Free Fishing Weekend
June	South Haven Harbor Fest
August	SHS Fish Boil - Blueberry Fest at August 17th
August	SHS Operation - United Soldier SH Salute to Veterans
August	Labor Day Weekend
ovember	South Haven Steelheaders River Tournament
ecember	South Haven Steelheaders Holiday Party

**South Haven Steelheaders Membership - Board Meeting Dates**  
 JAN - AR - M - MB - RSH - M - G  
 FEB - B - TH - rd - hursday - Guest speaker - B  
 MAR - st - rd - hursday - eek at the GR - Ultimate Sports Shop - Best Chance Fishing Seminar  
 APR - L - th - rd - hursday - Southern Lake Michigan Fisheries Workshop - r - an - ee - e - presenting  
 MAY - th - rd - hursday - prior to SHS - 10 Am - Membership meeting.  
 JUN - J - th - rd - hursday  
 JUL - L - th - rd - hursday  
 AUG - G - th - rd - hursday - prior to the Annual Fish Boil  
 SEP - S - th - rd - hursday - Regular - Board meeting to prioritize next year's events. event chairs.  
 OCT - 17th - 3rd Thursday - Regular and Board meeting to finalize next year's events and set calendar  
 NOV - 7th - 1st Thursday - Regular and Board Meeting to finalize budget and calendar  
 DEC - e - mber - o meeting in lieu of Holiday Party  
 he - ro Am - ournament Committee - ick - o meeting is the - st - Wednesday - o - vember

**Note:** All Board and membership meetings are generally held the third hursday of each month except or special circumstances such as - ro Am Captain's Meeting set up in May Fish Boil organizational meeting in August and prior to eer Season in - vember.  
**Meeting Location:** South Haven American Legion Post - Michigan Avenue - South Haven MI  
 Board Meetings start at 7 pm and membership meetings at 8 pm.  
 For more information email president southhavensteelheaders.com

South West Michigan Steelheaders 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. www.swmsteelheaders.com www.facebook.com/southwestmichigansteelheaders	
January	11 Annual party Club Elections 2023 Big Fish Awards
March	14 quarterly Meeting - Spring Big ake Fishing Techni ues
May	Schus Shootout Big ake Tournament
May	10-11 Schus Summer Challenge Tournament Tournament Trail Event
June	13 quarterly Meeting - Summer Run Steelhead Offshore Fishing the Thermocline
July	27 Trolling with the Troops Fishing Event
October	10 quarterly Meeting - Fall Run Salmon and Steelhead
December	7 Winter Challenge River Fishing Tournament

Membership Meetings Held at  
 St. Joseph-Benton Harbor Elks 541 01 Riverview Drive Benton Harbor MI 4 022  
 Board Meeting M, Social M, Meeting M  
 Contact Jim Marohn 248-20-2744



**DON'T MOVE A MUSSEL**

Double Check your Gear, Boat, Trailer, Vehicle - It's the Law!



Thumb Chapter Steelheaders Calendar of Events				
Month	Date	Time	Event	Location Information
May		am	Can Can Fishing Tournament	Harbor Beach Marina
May		pm	Regular Meeting	bly Foxhunters
une		am	eterans Fishing Outing	Harbor Beach Marina
uly		pm	Regular Meeting	bly Foxhunters
October		pm	Regular Meeting	bly Foxhunters

Contact Scott Stanke at for inquiries

Thunderbay Steelheaders Calendar of Events			
Month	Date	Time	Information
January		7 00pm	Monthly Meeting
January	27	7 00pm	Ice Fishing Derby on Lake Avolon
February	4	7 00pm	Monthly Meeting
March	2	7 00pm	Annual Meeting / Dinner 4 00
April		7 00pm	Monthly Meeting
May	2	7 00pm	Monthly Meeting
May	1	5 30am	Alpena tournament
June		5 30am	Pres ue sle Tournament
June	22 23	5 30am	Pres ue sle Tournament both mornings
July	1	7 00pm	Alpena tournament
August	5	7 00pm	Monthly Meeting
August	23	7 00pm	Rogers City Tournament
September		7 00pm	Monthly Meeting
October	7	7 00pm	Monthly Meeting
December	2	7 00pm	Monthly Meeting

Contact Dan Bouchard at dan.bouchard@hotmail.com for inquiries

White River Steelheaders Calendar of Events			
Month	Date	Time	Event Information
Note: All meetings will be held at 30 pm at the FW 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 3-0210 or Terry Clark at 231 3-05.			
January	4	30pm	Meeting at the FW
February	1	30pm	Meeting at the FW
March	7	30pm	Meeting at the FW
April	4	30pm	Meeting at the FW
May	2	30pm	Meeting at the FW
June		30pm	Meeting at the FW
July			o Meeting
August	1	30pm	Meeting at the FW
September	5	30pm	Meeting at the FW
October	3	30pm	Meeting at the FW
ovember	7	30pm	Meeting at the FW
December	5	30pm	Meeting at the FW

Sale Valid



# SEASON'S GREETINGS SAVINGS!

Hey Dude Shoes **\$39<sup>99</sup>**



Reg. \$59<sup>99</sup>

**MORE COLORS TO CHOOSE!**

LaCrosse Boots Alphabury Pro Non-Insulated **\$99<sup>99</sup>**



Reg. \$209<sup>99</sup>

**SAVE \$110**

Muck Boots Woody Max Mossy Oak Country **\$99<sup>99</sup>**



Reg. \$189<sup>99</sup>

**40% OFF!**



UNDER ARMOUR

Stillwater Supply Co. Brawny Buffalo Plaid **\$24<sup>99</sup>**



Reg. \$54<sup>99</sup>

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Mossy Oak Outfitters Thermowool Vest Bottomlands **\$19<sup>99</sup>**



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Carstens Blankets Plush Throw Blankets Outdoor Themed **\$19<sup>99</sup>**



Reg. \$34<sup>99</sup>

**GREAT HOLIDAY GIFT!**

**25% OFF!**

**GRUNDÉNS**  
WE ARE FISHING

**PERFORMANCE FISHING APPAREL**

**FREE**

**BULLDOG FEET BOOT DRYER**



With purchase of boots \$200 or more!

\*some exclusions may apply\*

LaCrosse Boots Ice King **\$169<sup>99</sup>**



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**GREAT ICE FISHING BOOT!**

Mountain Lodge Merino Wool Socks **Just \$6<sup>99</sup>**



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**STOCKING STUFFER ALERT**

Browning Gear Assorted Hoodies **\$14<sup>99</sup>**



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Mossy Oak Outfitters Sierra Hunting Jacket 3 in 1! **\$39<sup>99</sup>**



Reg. \$169<sup>99</sup>

AFTCO Apparel Reaper Hard Shell Hoodie **25% OFF**



Mountain & Isles Fleece Jacket **\$19<sup>99</sup>**



Reg. \$39<sup>99</sup>