

DNR To Stock More Brown Trout, Steelhead in Lake Huron

Outdoor Matters

A column from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources

By now, most anglers on Michigan's "sunrise side" are aware the chinook salmon fishery in Lake Huron is not what it was just a few years ago. Although some respectable catch rates continue in some of the lake's more northern ports, salmon fishing in the southern end of the lake is almost nonexistent.

The food web has changed dramatically because of the arrival of exotic species, including zebra and quagga mussels, gobies, and others. The energy that formerly sustained the alewife forage base is being used up elsewhere. With the shift to a more near-shore-oriented food base, the prospects for chinook recovery any time soon do not appear to be bright.

In an attempt to restore Lake Huron's salmonid fishery, especially in the southern end of the lake, the Department of Natural Resources plans to change its stocking regimens for other species, most notably brown trout and steelhead, which are better able to use the near-shore prey base.

Let's start with brown trout. They are far more near-shore oriented than chinook salmon and can do well with a near-shore prey base.

"Unfortunately, our typical spring fingerling plants have been heavily predated upon by cormorants as well as other near-shore fish species," said DNR Lake Huron Basin Coordinator Kurt Newman. "So, instead of planting spring fingerlings, we plan to shift our efforts to planting fall yearlings."

Beginning this fall, Mr. Newman said the DNR will attempt to stock fish that measure about 10 inches and "we'll put them in the lake after the cormorants have migrated out of the area for the winter."

But, because of limited hatchery space, the DNR Fisheries Division will be able to raise only about a third as many brown trout for stocking. Instead of planting 260,000 to 280,000 brown trout, the plan is to stock about 85,000 browns in five locations.

Fisheries staff already have begun preliminary creel-census work to help determine returns

from spring fingerling stockings. The goal is to experiment with the fall yearling stockings for three years and assess the return rates of brown trout to the creel.

Steelhead, which roam more than brown trout, typically live higher in the water column than chinooks. Steelhead also are more able to take advantage of near-shore prey (such as mayflies) than chinooks. But, like browns, they are subject to heavy predation when they reach the smolt stage. So the DNR plans to convert some of the net pens once used for chinooks into steelhead production

According to Mr. Newman, the DNR will produce 120,000 steelhead for Lake Huron from the Thompson State Fish Hatchery next year. About half of them will be raised to smolt size stocked as usual, but the DNR plans to transfer the other 60,000 to net pens at Harbor Beach.

"The plan is to hold those fish until they are larger and release them later in the season, perhaps short-circuiting some of the predation they suffer," Mr. Newman said. "This strategy appears to be paying dividends in New York."

Again, it's the DNR's intention to use the net pens for three years and then assess the merits of the stocking change.

Meanwhile, the DNR hasn't forgotten about lake trout. It is doing well.

Fisheries managers are assessing different strategies for lake trout stocking, including "pulse stocking" of lake trout: The DNR would not plant lake trout at the same location every year, but rotate planting locations, giving planted lakers an opportunity to mature without stocking additional year-classes on top of them. The idea is that pulse stocking could result in a larger percentage of the planted fish reaching maturity.

Despite the decline in the chinook fishery, a couple of important native species, walleye and perch, are on the rise.

Walleye fishing is outstanding in Saginaw Bay and the fishery appears to be spreading along the Lake Huron lakeshore, notably on the southern end of the lake. And although the perch fishery is not



Lake Huron's aquatic community and recreational fishery look very different today than they did only a decade ago. Odds are, they will look different in another decade, as well. But the DNR's goals for Lake Huron remain the same: to maintain a healthy, balanced aquatic community and provide an excellent recreational fishery. (DNR photographs by David Kenyon)

especially shiny in Saginaw Bay, there has been a dramatic improvement in the perch population in the northern end of Lake Huron, in part, the DNR believes, because of cormorant-control programs.

In addition, DNR's experiments with native lake herring (cisco) production show it may be feasible to attempt to rehabilitate these populations in some areas of the lake that traditionally held them, but where they have virtually disappeared. Such a program would not only revitalize traditional near-shore recreational fisheries in places such as Thunder Bay and Saginaw Bay, but ciscoes also could potentially serve as a food source for the larger salmonids, replacing the alewives in the food chain. Although the DNR currently does

not have hatchery space to begin a lake herring-rehabilitation program immediately, the agency is investigating potential funding sources.

"Because of the changes in the food web, Lake Huron is wide open for us to try things," Mr. Newman said. "We have the opportunity to look at what the ecosystem is providing, then conduct appropriate large-scale management experiments."

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

St. Ignace Resident Questions Water Bills

To the Editor:

I'm writing today to make the people of St. Ignace aware that we are being taken advantage of by our own water department.

I stopped in about six months ago to complain about my bill, like a lot of St. Ignace people. I was told I probably had a leak somewhere. I had my house checked out, and no leak, yet every third month my bill doubles. (I only have a leak every third month). So for six months, I've kept my stubs and every third bill it was doubled. An elderly lady two streets over has been watching hers and, guess what? Her leak is only every third month. She complained, too, and was told she had a leak.

I would like the people of St. Ignace to go to the water company and get a print out of their bills for the last year and look it over. You will see I'm right. Take it to the board; something has to be done. We as a town are being ripped off from our water company.

I'm a family of two. We're gone to work all day and home after 6 p.m., yet every third month we use 4,000 gallons of water.

It's time to put a stop to the leaks. If anyone knows who to contact over this, I would enjoy hearing from you.

Please check your bill. See how long they have been getting away with this. It's time to put a stop to this. Please check your bills and complain. It needs to be done; we need to stop the "leaks" as a whole.

Cindy Rickley
St. Ignace

Editor's Note: City water meters are read (not estimated) every month, and the meters do have leak indicators, said Les Therrian, head of the water department. Water customers can contact his department at 643-7451 for questions or concerns about water bills, and he or a staff member are available to come to a customer's house to help determine the cause of any problem. He also uses history of use records, available at the department, to help address concerns. He said he is not familiar with any complaints regarding higher bills every three months.

St. Ignace News Policies

Letters:

All responsible letters will be considered for publication and may be edited. They must be signed and a telephone number must be included for verification. Personal thank-you notes, personal attacks against other people, form letters, and letters promoting political candidates are not accepted, although letters for or against ballot proposals are welcome.

Obituaries:

The St. Ignace News maintains a policy of not charging for obituaries and we do often add information or rewrite them for clarity and reader interest. Obituaries that the family wants published exactly as submitted can be placed in the newspaper for \$75. Photographs are welcome at no charge.

Weddings:

Weddings with photographs are published without charge within 45 days of the ceremony. After 45 days, a photograph can be included for \$35.00.

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Michigan Politics

By
George Weeks



Newspapers: Shaken, Still Stir

The watchdogs are ailing, but still successful on guard.

The newspaper industry is among many with declining financial health these economically troubled days. But papers big and small have been recognized yet again for shining the bright light of public scrutiny on those who act in the shadows against the public interest.

The exposed wrongdoers are replete across the nation. Self-destruction abounds. Here or there a governor, or a mayor, or a city manager, or a sheriff, or a judge, or a business.

The ailing *New York Times* just won four Pulitzer Prizes, journalism's highest award, including one for coverage of a sex scandal that resulted in the resignation of Governor Eliot Spitzer.

The ailing *Detroit Free Press*, which, like the *Detroit News*, has cut home delivery to three days, won a Local Reporting Pulitzer for exposure of the sex-charged text message scandal that led to the resignation and jailing of ex-Mayor Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick.

(In 1994, the *Detroit News* won a Pulitzer for uncovering a scandal at the state House Fiscal Agency. The *Free Press* won one in 1945 for coverage of another legislative scandal.)

The Freep's "Mayor's Lies" whistle blowing won the Public Service Award from the Michigan Press Association (MPA) for "a meritorious public service that has made a significant contribution" to community betterment. The other finalists were the *Ironwood Daily Globe* for its "City Commission" series and the *Jackson Citizen Patriot* for its "County Road Commission" series.

The *Traverse City Record-Eagle* won recognition from the Michigan Press Association and others for its coverage and commentary on Meijer Incorporated's illegal campaign efforts against elected Acme Township officials who opposed a proposed development.

Tenacious local journalism across the land often focuses on sheriffs. A paper in Arizona just won a Pulitzer for coverage of how one there endangered investigation of violent crime. The *Record-Eagle* was recently recognized by the Associated Press for sustained coverage, and editorial writing, about the suicide of a young woman in the Grand Traverse County Jail.

Daily and weekly papers throughout Michigan maintain pressure on public officials to adhere to open meetings laws. As noted by MPA Executive Director Mike MacLaren: "While some may feel that abiding by open government laws is tantamount to drinking truth serum and being interrogated under klieg lights, it really comes down to this: taxpayers deserve transparency. Newspapers have been the catalyst for taxpayer transparency for centuries. They will continue to be as they transition from 'news on paper' to digital delivery."

When I expressed preference for news on paper, he said:

"I do think you'll see a hybrid delivery model somewhat akin to what Detroit has done. There's a lot of power in print, but those who want it are going to have to pay a premium for it - there are entrepreneurs who are buying stacks of the print editions and home delivering them. Expect more of that."

He said, "One-size-fits-all newspapers will be around for a long time, but are morphing into targeted content delivered across multiple channels. My larger concern is how, in an increasingly niched news age, good taxpayer accountability journalism will have the self-sustaining resources."

Nourish the watchdogs. Their nips benefit you.

Earlier Chrysler Rescue

The revolving door ownership/leadership of today's beleaguered Chrysler is in sharp contrast to that of 1979-80 when the federal government and Michigan provided loan guarantees to the troubled company, thanks in part to then-Congressman Jim Blanchard and then-Governor Bill Milliken.

In 1983, Chrysler paid off the loans seven years early. As company boss Lee Iacocca said then: "We borrow money the old fashioned way. We pay it back."

Northern Aides

Over several decades, governors have had some effective staff representatives based in the Upper Peninsula. One was Tom Baldini, special assistant to Governor Jim Blanchard and later chairman of the U.S. section of the International Joint Commission.

Baldini, now Marquette-based district director for U.S. Representative Bart Stupak, recently was named by Governor Jennifer Granholm to the Michigan Technological University board of control.

Granholm also has named Ann Jousma-Miller, who for three years has been Delta County Economic Development director, as her Marquette-based regional director for the Upper Peninsula, effective April 20. She also will on occasion travel to Traverse City, currently without a Granholm regional representative.

Jousma-Miller, a Granholm appointee to the Agricultural Commission, also in the past has represented members of the Legislature.

"You carry so much knowledge from one opportunity to the next," she told *Upper Peninsula Business Today*.

G.T. Long of Horton Bay is the longtime Michigan Democratic Party field representative for the U.P. and the northern lower. A 1992 candidate for the state House, Long works closely with legislative candidates.

Former Republican National Committeewoman Sharon Wise of Traverse City is the Michigan GOP's U.P./northern lower representative, as well as the Traverse area representative for U.S. Representative Dave Camp (R-Midland).

Wise also is co-chair of the state party. In that capacity, she Friday issued a "Special Alert" and fundraising appeal to party loyalists following press reports that Granholm is among those President Barack Obama may consider to replace retiring U.S. Supreme Court Justice David Souter. She said:

"Your support can help stop Jennifer Granholm and her radical agenda from getting a lifetime appointment to the U.S. Supreme Court."

It's not clear how such donations would be used to derail such an unlikely appointment - certainly not to lobby Senators Carl Levin and Debbie Stabenow. But both parties will trumpet any excuse to raise bucks.

George Weeks retired in 2006 after 22 years as political columnist for The Detroit News. His weekly Michigan Politics column is syndicated by Superior Features.

Burns Planned at Seney Refuge

Seney National Wildlife Refuge will be conducting a series of prescribed burns this spring and summer. The first prescribed burn was Monday, May 4, southwest of Germfask, approximately one-half mile west of M-77.

The burn will enhance habitat for a number of species of wildlife,

including white tailed deer, yellow rail, ruffed grouse, and sharp-tailed grouse. The burn also helps reduce fuel accumulations to reduce the severity of wildfires.

Any questions or concerns can be directed to Gary Lindsay, fire management officer, at (906) 586-9857, extension 19.

The St. Ignace News

and Les Cheneaux Islands Weekly Wave

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www.SaintIgnaceNews.com

USPS Periodical Publication Number - 462-380

ESTABLISHED 1878

Published each Thursday at Saint Ignace, Mackinac County, Michigan

Entered in Saint Ignace, Michigan Post Office as Periodical Mail Matter. Act of March 3, 1879

Periodical Postage Paid at Saint Ignace, MI • Additional Postage Paid at Gaylord, MI

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to St. Ignace News, PO Box 277, St. Ignace, MI 49781

Volume 130, Number 5 Thursday, May 7, 2009

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Subscriptions:

\$42 in Mackinac, Chippewa, Emmet, Luce, and Cheboygan counties.

\$52 elsewhere in the United States and military post offices.

\$35 for the Web edition at www.saintignacenews.com

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The quotation under the flag of *The St. Ignace News* on Page 1 is from the 10 triads written by Dr. Fred Newton Scott, creator and teacher of the first continuous course in journalism in the United States at the University of Michigan in 1890. The 10 triads are chiseled on the parapet of the Detroit News Building at 615 Lafayette Boulevard, Detroit. They were headed "Ideals of the Press" or "The Newspaper in a Free Society," and serve as a reminder of what a free press means to us.