

THE GREAT LAKES SPORT FISHING NEWS

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No. 1

A Worst-Case Scenario Regarding Michigan's Au Sable and Obsolete Dams?

by Robb Smith

While following the disposition meetings and discussions of the Consumers Energy hydro-electric facilities on the Au Sable River, a wildcard scenario has come to light—the possible sale of the facility assets to another owner. Many believe this is the worst possible outcome from this process.

Thomas A. Buhr, in his recent book, *The Big Water*, recounted in vivid detail the taming of the Au Sable River's rapid flow for use as a source of hydro-electric power. After sensing the end of the lumbering era, Edward Loud, following in the footsteps of his famous father, Henry, joined forces with William A. Foote, combining real estate acquisition and technical knowledge to foster the creation of six hydro-electric dams on the Au Sable River. Loud and Foote enlisted the enormous funding required to construct the dams from several financiers, including

Andrew Cooke, Anton Hordenpyle, Henry Walbridge and John E. Weadock. This was an enlightened group (after which many dams and powerhouses are named) who would eventually organize the Consumer's Power Company and change the course of the Au Sable River forever.

The result of their work was a system of well-engineered and sturdily built dams that provides electric power via 150 miles of uniquely developed 140,000-volt transmission lines reaching from the Au Sable Valley to Oscoda, Midland, Bay City, Saginaw and Flint. The power produced was instrumental to the development of industry in these areas. At the time, the entire project was an engineering marvel. Consumers Power, now called Consumers Energy, has generally been a good steward in that it has safely maintained their

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A mixed bag of Great Lakes trout and salmon are ready for the cleaning table. Photo: Michigan Sea Grant

Recreational Fishing Isn't Just About Fun, It Also Provides Food

Dan O'Keefe, Michigan
Sea Grant

Harvesting local, wild-caught fish is one of the benefits of fishing. Each year, Michigan anglers fishing under a recreational license harvest fish worth over \$40 million from Great Lakes waters alone.

Fishing isn't always easy, but sometimes everything comes together

for the perfect trip. If you are at the right place at the right time with the right bait, it can be very gratifying. I had one of those days this fall. Salmon were just starting to make their way from Lake Michigan into river mouth areas, which can make for excellent fishing or a lot of frustration.

At this time of year salmon stop actively feeding

on baitfish, although they do occasionally bite out of aggression, curiosity, or habit. On some days you will see dozens of salmon jumping and splashing while they ignore every lure and bait that passes by. At other times there may be no sign of fish, but your first cast results in a jolting strike.

It was my good fortune to have that happen this fall on that one magical trip. In fact, I hooked into another salmon on my second cast, as well. After a few riotous hours of drag-peeling runs, three-foot fish jumping clear out of the water, and trying to avoid getting tangled in my own line as hooked fish attempted to dart between my legs, I decided to call it an evening after hooking six salmon and landing four.

Sure, I could have stayed and enjoyed several more hours of some of the best salmon fishing I've experienced, but the night was not yet complete for other reasons. These fish were fresh from Lake Michigan—mostly silver and still high in fat content. One was a female full of eggs. I bled each of the fish to help improve the quality of the meat, as well, and now it was time to get the fish onto ice in the cooler bag in my car and head

home to process fish.

For me, and for many other people, fishing isn't just about the fun of catching fish. Much of the satisfaction comes from properly cleaning, preserving, and preparing the fish to provide healthy, delicious food for family and friends (yes, and myself as well!). After filleting the salmon, cutting fillets into portion-sized pieces, vacuum-sealing some to freeze, preparing two different brines to soak other pieces for smoking, cutting and curing egg skeins to use for bait later, and preparing a meal of bang bang salmon for the family, I finally called it a night.

How do we value
recreational fisheries?

In my time working for Sea Grant, I have been involved in a few projects related to the economics of fishing. Most have focused on demonstrating the (substantial) economic impacts of people

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Search groups for MSSFA

Sea Lamprey Abundances Spike After Covid-Related Travel Restrictions

Relaxation in sea lamprey control in 2020 and 2021 has resulted in above-target numbers, but trends are positive thanks to recent control efforts

ANN ARBOR, MI—The Great Lakes Fishery Commission (Commission) has announced the annual sea lamprey abundances for each Great Lake in 2024. In it, the Commission noted

that populations of non-native predatory sea lampreys are above targets in all five of the Great Lakes. The sea lamprey, a highly noxious fish, spiked in numbers when field crews were con-

strained in their ability to conduct sea lamprey control in 2020 and 2021. Because of the sea lamprey's life cycle, scientists are now seeing the ramifications of those reduced control seasons. Recent levels of sea lamprey control give the Commission reason to believe that sea lamprey numbers are now on the way back down.

Sea lampreys are an invasive fish that entered the upper Great Lakes accidentally through shipping canals starting in 1921. Sea lampreys feed on the blood and body fluids

of fish by attaching to them with a tooth-filled, suction cup mouth and file a hole through the fish's scales and skin with a piston-like rasping tongue. The average sea lamprey is capable of killing up to 40 pounds (18 kg) of fish during its parasitic stage.

Before sea lamprey control, which began in 1958, the species killed far more fish than humans did, causing considerable economic and ecological damage. Sea

“Sea Lamprey”
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Photo credit: Great Lakes Fishery Commission

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Exciting Competition, Significant Cash Prizes Expected at the Ludington Offshore Classic, July 14-20

Ludington, home to one of the premier salmon fishing ports on the Great Lakes, is a must-visit stop on the Lake Michigan tournament trail. Its vibrant, welcoming atmosphere and unmatched fishing experience keep anglers returning year after year.

Mark your calendars for the 2025 Ludington Offshore Classic, set for July 14-20. This exciting week features contests for professionals, amateurs, women,

and youth, with impressive cash prizes on the line. Supported by local businesses, the tournament includes public weigh-ins at Ludington's scenic Waterfront Park, drawing lively crowds and creating an unforgettable community celebration. Don't miss your chance to be part of the action!

Big Boys Tournament

The Big Boys Tournament will kick off tournament week in Ludington on July 15-16. Last year,

this contest saw an amazing \$21,700 awarded to the crew of Hammbone. Captain Tony Hamm recalled a fantastic two days of fishing off the coast of Ludington.

"First, our strategy both days was to catch our kings, then pursue the off-species (lake trout)," Hamm said. "We fished north of Big Point Sauble for the king bite and then offshore for the lakers."

On Day 1, Hammbone reeled in the 12-fish limit

for a total of 150.4 pounds. On Day 2, the crew landed 168.95 pounds (11 fish) including a Big Fish of 27 pounds.

"We have been competing in tournaments for 26 years," Hamm said. "I'm sure I'm partial to the Ludington tournament, but we are the biggest and, in my opinion, the most organized. I love the weigh-in process/scales with the display and a great weigh-in and event crew."

Ludington Offshore Classic Pro

The largest number since 2008, 135 boats competed in the Ludington Offshore Classic two-day pro/am tournament last July on Lake Michigan.

Team EZ Limits was the pro division winner, walking away with the \$20,000 top prize for its two-day total of 257.25 pounds.

This was the third time the EZ Limits team had competed in Ludington

after participating in competitions in South Haven, Grand Haven, Holland, and Saugatuck on the tournament trail.

"Our strategy going into the tournament was to find an area to fish that we could be confident we could catch our tournament limit of 12 fish," EZ Limits captain Josh Ezinga said. "As we pre-fished and learned more about the different areas, we knew catching the three 'off-species' required to weigh the full limit of 12 to maximize our fish points was going to be difficult, so we adjusted our presentation accordingly."

"On Day 2, we knew we had a lot of ground to make up to have a shot at winning, so we ran a spread more focused on targeting big kings. We had luck on our side that day and landed most of the mature salmon bites we had."

The Captain Chuck's II Big Fish first-place award went to Team Hiatus with a 34.95-pound fish. These weights and totals are examples of the excellent fishing that happens every year off the coast of Ludington.

"The Ludington tournament is one of our favorites," Ezinga said. "I've fished all the events on the trail now, and it is tough to beat the competition that attends this tournament. The committee does a fantastic job organizing and running the tournament. It is also unique in the fact that it draws a large crowd to the weigh in, and it seems like the whole city is interested in the event, not just the fishermen entered in the tournament."

Join us this summer for an unforgettable fishing adventure! To register for the next offshore tournament, visit ludingtontournament.com. Registration begins April 1, 2025.

2025 Schedule of Events:

- July 14:**
Big Boys captains meeting
- July 15-16:**
Big Boys Tournament
- July 17:**
Ludington Legends Memorial Tournament
- July 18:**
Ladies and Youth tournaments
- July 19-20:**
Pro/Am Ludington Offshore Classic



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“Recreational”
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traveling to pursue fishing as a recreational activity. For tourism to generate economic impacts in a community, people must travel and spend money. This is one way to look at things, but it considers the angler only as a consumer, ignoring the importance of fishing to the angler who saves money by fishing

close to home.

When we talk about the value that fishing provides to society, we are really limiting our frame of reference if we view fishing only as an outdoor pastime akin to golf or hiking. In tourism studies, these other forms of recreation are considered “substitution behaviors” that anglers would engage in if fishing wasn’t available. I would argue that only hunting, gathering, and

perhaps gardening would potentially qualify as substitutions for fishing for one simple reason: They all provide food.

Returning to the salmon fishing example, an economic impact study would have ignored the substantial economic benefits provided by procuring fresh, local fish for my family. Before being cleaned, the total weight of Chinook salmon caught was 61 pounds. Fillet

yield for Chinook salmon is 0.55, which means that I harvested roughly 35.55 pounds of fillets that evening. If you were to buy Chinook salmon harvested from the Great Lakes, you would pay \$18 per pound through one of the few online retailers that offers the option. Wild Alaskan Chinook is a much more expensive substitute, while farmed salmon or other less desirable species can be less expensive. Still, using Great Lakes fish prices as a reference suggests that I offset my grocery costs by \$639.90 with a few hours of fishing.

You might think that salmon is an exceptionally expensive, but Great Lakes panfish command even higher retail prices. Great Lakes bluegill fillets sell for \$24.95/lb. and yellow perch retail for as high as \$32.50/lb. Although coldwater salmon and trout certainly get a lot of attention from Great Lake anglers, warmer bays and connecting waters like Lake St. Clair and the Detroit River offer fantastic fishing for panfish and gamefish like walleye, pike, bass, and catfish.

Everyone is aware of the rising price of groceries over the past few years, and seafood is no exception. In most households, store-bought seafood is not a staple food. It is reserved for special occasions, entertaining company, or perhaps consumed in larger quantities by those who are health conscious and have the means to afford it. The average household income for frequent seafood buyers is \$26,000 higher than that of people who never buy seafood. The average price per pound of seafood at the grocery store is now over three times that of chicken or pork. In May 2024, Circana found that the retail price of seafood was \$9.43/lb.—quite a bit lower than prices for most Great Lakes fish.

In Michigan, we put a high premium on the fish species we can catch in

	Weight of Fillets Harvested (Pounds)	Retail Value of Fillets Harvested (US Dollars)
Lake St. Clair	30,944	\$ 260,811.00
Detroit River	793,161	\$ 5,407,932.92
Lake Erie	376,729	\$ 3,104,806.17
Lake Superior	263,766	\$ 2,091,982.56
Lake Huron	1,195,466	\$ 10,286,682.99
Lake Michigan	2,022,514	\$ 18,980,926.95
TOTAL	4,682,580	\$ 40,133,142.59

Table 1. Weight and retail value (4.6 million pounds of worth over \$40 million) of fillets harvested annually by anglers fishing under a recreational fishing license in Michigan waters of the Great Lakes based on Department of Natural Resources data, yield, and retail price of Great Lakes species available from online retailers.

local waters. It is part of our regional culture, and likely stems from the experiences many of us connect to the act of catching and harvesting fish for personal use. When I lived in Mississippi, this was very evident. Few people knew what a walleye was, and walleye were not available at supermarkets or restaurants. Instead, catfish were the fish of choice for rich and poor alike.

One could make the argument that a cheaper substitute, like farm-raised tilapia, could serve as the basis for determining grocery cost offsets from harvesting Great Lakes fish under a recreational fishing license, but I would argue that our regionally available species command a high price precisely because of their unique contribution to our shared outdoor heritage in the Great Lakes state.

Retail value of fillets harvested by Great Lakes anglers in Michigan

With the help of folks with Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR), I determined the total weight of fish fillets harvested by anglers fishing under a recreational fishing license in Michigan waters of the Great Lakes. Creel surveys conducted by DNR served as the starting point, since these surveys are used

to calculate the number and weight of fish harvested.

Published yields for different species were then used to determine the weight of fillets. When published values were not available, the yield of another species of similar shape was used as a surrogate (e.g., bluegill for pumpkinseed sunfish) or determined by a colleague with extensive experience in fish processing. Finally, retail cost of skin-on fillets of Great Lakes species was determined by searching online. When multiple vendors offered the same species at different prices, the average price was used. Surrogate species were used for comparable species in some cases (e.g., Chinook salmon for coho, channel catfish for bullhead).

All told, anglers fishing under recreational fishing licenses in Michigan harvest over 4.6 million pounds of fillets worth over \$40 million from the Great Lakes on an annual basis (see Table 1; more details on calculations and references at <https://bit.ly/OKEEFE>). This doesn’t include harvest of fish from inland lakes and rivers, either. When you consider that roughly 70% of trips taken by Michigan anglers

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Shallow Water Success

by Denny Bobeldyk
Holland MI

After a successful 2024 fishing season it's time to step back and reassess what went right for me this past season. For many years I have tried things that usually don't work out for me. This involved a lot of moving to different depths trying to catch more fish. But this year I found something that worked out well for my boat and my fishing buddies. Plus, I got to share this with four of my good friends on many trips to the big lake. Here's hoping your season was also as successful as it was for me and my boat mates. As you get older you realize how much you still learn by the mistakes you made in previous years and by trying other tactics. This can make you a better fisherman. In 2024 I decided to do things differently, which taught me a lot about how I can target fish in future years. 2024 will go down as a learning experience for me.

Every year out there is a try this, try that experience. Outside of trying to target certain species of fish in the Spring, the summer months were completely different for me in 2024. I'm talking about June, July and August. Let's just talk about this period of time for now. Of course, in late August and September we do get the shallow bite in close to shore. But by the middle of summer, it is usually tough fishing out in the deeper water.

After the Spring early season when fish bite in the shallow water, the fish normally scatter to summer deeper depths where the water temperature maintains a steady thermocline. The problem is finding this tight band of water. This usually means fishing depths anywhere from 100 feet to 200 feet or even 300 feet. Sometimes there is not a thermocline to be found. This also means fishing down deep and motoring many miles from shore. Most fish are caught

with deep copper line and riggers. There is a constant search for that 47-to-50-degree water. It could mean a lot of searching and fishing unproductive water where this thermocline doesn't exist. I have spent many wasted hours chasing

fish that just weren't there. It's fun to be out there but it can be a bit boring! There is usually a lot of variability in water temperatures where only a few fish are present. It's a big lake and even when you cover a lot of water you can come up empty! I have personally wasted a lot of time and fuel trying to find the perfect water temperature

and loads of stacked up fish. This chasing usually begins when the water warms up in June, July, and August. In fact, my boat mates and I call this period of time the

"June Swoon". I find the most difficult fishing is in

"Success"
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Author Denny Bobeldyk



Author's daughter, Sara Bobeldyk

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lampreys have made the Great Lakes home, but the control program has been one of history's biggest invasive species control success stories, reducing populations by 90% or more in most of the Great Lakes. That said, sea lampreys, like a coiled spring, have the ability to bounce back forcefully in numbers if controls are relaxed.

Sea lamprey abundances relative to targets are reported as 3-year averages for all lakes. According to the Commission's report, 2024 is the third year that reflected the impacts of reduced control effort due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The number of adult sea lampreys captured during 2024 was 8,619 more than the three-year pre-COVID average of 38,167 (2017-2019). The largest increases in abundance were observed in lakes Superior and Ontario during 2023 and 2024. Although still above target, lakes Michigan, Huron, and Erie have seen flattening trends in abundance since treatments have returned to a pre-pandemic level.

"The increased abundance in all lakes is not

unexpected given significantly reduced control effort during 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic," said Commission chair Ethan Baker, who is also the mayor of Troy, Michigan. "Control effort in 2024 continued at pre-pandemic levels, but elevated and variable adult sea lamprey abundances should be expected over the next year or two before turning back downward."

"The sustained increase in sea lamprey abundances following a lapse in annual control effort highlights the continued need for ongoing sea lamprey control and continued research into new and innovative control methods in the Great Lakes," said Jim McKane, the Commission's vice-chair. "Native to the Atlantic Ocean, invasive sea lampreys remain a significant threat to the Great Lakes ecosystem, and control efforts must remain a top priority for conservation and management efforts in the region. After more than six decades of successful sea lamprey control, the reduced effort during the COVID-19 pandemic shows that if controls are ceased or relaxed for even a short period of time, sea lamprey populations will rebound, and the fishery

will suffer."

The Commission was established by the Governments of Canada and the United States in 1955 in part as a response to the catastrophic damage caused by the sea lamprey invasion. The 1954 Convention on Great Lakes Fisheries charges the Commission to conduct sea lamprey control, formulate a coordinated bi-national research program, and coordinate fisheries management among the jurisdiction in the basin. Sea lamprey control is conducted in partnership with Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the US Fish and Wildlife Service, with research support from the US Geological Survey and other agencies and institutions. Future control methods are a priority for the Commission and are supported by the Commission's science program.

"Maintaining consistent sea lamprey control in the Great Lakes basin is essential to sustaining the robust fishery that provides jobs, sustenance, and recreation for the people of the Great Lakes basin," said McKane.

Added Baker, "Sea lamprey abundance targets are our benchmark for a healthy fishery. Targets for each lake are determined

based on the average number of sea lampreys across a five-year period when sea lamprey wounding rates on fish are deemed acceptable. We continually strive to reach and maintain a level of sea lamprey suppression, which allows a fishery that supports the millions of people that live, work, and recreate in the Great Lakes."

"The COVID-19 pandemic provided an unintentional, but valuable, lesson. Restricted control effort during 2020 and 2021 allowed millions of larval sea lampreys, that would have otherwise been removed, to survive and parasitize millions of pounds of valuable fish," Baker continued.

A forthcoming multiagency study funded by the Commission, led by the US Geological Survey, and supported by state and federal agencies, will provide an in-depth analysis of the effect of reduced control effort during 2020 and 2021 on Great Lakes sea lamprey populations.

"Thankfully control effort has returned to pre-pandemic levels, but elevated sea lamprey populations should continue to be expected over the next year or two," Baker concluded. "If there was ever proof of the effectiveness of sea lamprey control, the 2020 pandemic and its effect on sea lamprey populations was it."

REPORT DETAILS, BY LAKE:

LAKE SUPERIOR: Adult sea lamprey abundance remains above target for Lake Superior. Stream-specific estimates showed the Brule and Bad rivers contributed 35% and 23%, to the adult abun-

dance, indicating that impacts of reduced control effort during the pandemic may be delayed due to slower larval growth associated with the relatively cooler water temperatures in the Lake Superior basin. In addition, sea lampreys were discovered in an unnamed tributary near Nipigon, ON and in Little Carp River (Gogebic County, MI), though these streams are small and would have a marginal contribution to the lake-wide population. Additionally, sea lamprey escapement occurred upstream of sea lamprey barriers on the Big Carp and Misery rivers and Stokeley Creek. Consequently, several factors could be contributing to the increased abundance such as reduced control effort, change in sea lamprey distribution, newly discovered infestations, escapement past barriers, and fully recruited larval populations in index streams. Over the past three years, Lake Superior has received a higher-than-average amount of control effort and with this increased effort, a decrease in lake-wide abundance is to be expected beginning in 2025.

LAKE MICHIGAN: The Lake Michigan adult sea lamprey abundance target was decreased from 34,982 to 20,526 based on the average sea lamprey abundance estimate from 2015-2019, when wounding was near the target of 5 wounds/100 lake trout. In 2024, adult sea lamprey abundance remains above target. Stream-specific estimates showed the Manistique and Big Manistee rivers contributed most to the lake-wide adult abundance estimate at 45% and 22%. Additionally, sea

lamprey escapement was documented upstream of the sea lamprey barrier on the Keweenaw River.

LAKE HURON: Adult sea lamprey abundance slightly increased and remains above target for Lake Huron. Stream-specific estimates showed the Cheboygan River contributed most to the 2024 lake-wide adult abundance estimate at 34%.

LAKE ERIE: Adult sea lamprey abundance slightly increased and remains above target for Lake Erie. Stream-specific estimates showed Cattaraugus and Big Creeks contributed most to the lake-wide adult abundance estimate at 36% and 38%.

LAKE ONTARIO: Adult sea lamprey abundance remains above target for Lake Ontario. Stream-specific estimates showed the Humber and Black rivers contributed most to the lake-wide adult abundance estimate at 47% and 33%. A newly infested stream was discovered near Port Hope, ON (Ganaraska River), but the overall impact to the lake is considered minimal given the low abundance of larval sea lampreys observed. Additionally, sea lamprey escapement was documented above the sea lamprey barrier on Shelter Valley Creek. Decreases in the lake-wide adult abundance are a response to the resumption of pre-pandemic control effort. Lake-wide abundance is expected to continue to decline in 2025.

For more information about methodology and to see lake-specific graphs, visit www.glfcc.org/status.php.



Photo credit: Great Lakes Fishery Commission



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

MSSFA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR Dennis Eade



House Bill 6229, which would have increased hunting and fishing license fees across the board did not make it out of the House before the members adjourned and therefore will not be passed into law during lame duck. Chief Claramunt reached out to all the groups who supported the bill and said he "looks forward to working with us in pursuit of this common goal in 2025" and feels confident that together we can get it over the finish line. I know we all are disappointed because we worked so hard to get it passed. The number of emails to legislators and direct contacts we had with representatives and

senators was noteworthy. I am hopeful we can capitalize on the inroads we made with Republican members now that they will be in the majority beginning in January.

The NRC Steelhead Task Group, charged with studying the potential causes of a drop in steelhead returning to the rivers last fall and winter, began drafting its findings and recommendations. I am encouraged that the committee is considering recommendations that will require further research into the factors contributing to the observed decline other than just utilizing further bag limit regulations to address the issue. It became evident

in the process that we don't have sufficient data to draw specific conclusions. The written report will be submitted to the NRC in early 2025.

The Michigan Hydro Relicensing Coalition identified a number of red flags with the sale option Consumers Power is pursuing with its thirteen hydroelectric projects across the state and is opposed to the sale for the following reasons:

- Disincentive for future capital investments in the dams. The cost-recovery mechanism will no longer be an option for any new owner given that it would not be selling power directly to the public. The new owner will have no incentive to make long-term investments in the dams and any capital outlays would be disincentives cutting into the revenue stream the new owners get from the Consumers PPA.
- Economic viability -- Consumers is a well-managed corporation, so it begs

the question "if Consumers is challenged to turn a profit from these projects, how will another entity be able to, especially without a cost-recovery mechanism?"

- Ratepayer "unfairness" - while a new owner cannot pass along any future investments to the public, Consumers will be able to pass along the costs of the power purchase agreement to its ratepayers. This is unfair to ratepayers who will continue to pay for an energy source that is more expensive than alternative sources.

- Consumers abandonment of local communities - Consumers has owned these hydropower projects for 100+ years and Consumers has extracted financial gain and needs to be a good neighbor, not walking away through a sale. It owes these communities an exit plan.

- Mandate for an "end-game" of the hydropower projects. The projects are

aging infrastructure that can't last forever and if there is no end-of-life removal plan, who then is responsible for removal?

- Post-sale license requirement implementation - even though Consumers has stated that all existing license requirements go with the projects, and any proposed sale would need FERC and MPSC approval, there is no guarantee that a new owner will continue to meet all of the license requirements.

- Financial assurances - The Coalition is a strong advocate for a financial assurance mechanism to both FERC and the MPSC (e.g., escrow funding from the annual revenue stream; bonding, insurance). A proposed new owner certainly cannot provide enough income for operations, repairs, profits and ultimate removal. Removal has to fit in the financial equation of the sale somewhere.

The Coalition envisions putting out a position state-

ment used in conjunction with news releases, media articles, and other outlets that we may employ to get the word out there. MSSFA supports this effort wholeheartedly because of the potential disastrous impact dam failures will have on our cold-water fisheries.

Construction on the FishPass Project in Traverse City has begun so we can begin seeing progress on the first-ever selective fish pass system to be implemented worldwide. This comes at the same time construction to build a barrier to keep invasive carp out of the Great Lakes is one step closer to reality. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers announced last Wednesday that it awarded the first construction contract on the \$1.15 billion project at the Brandon Road Lock and Dam on the Des Plaines River in Joliet, Illinois. The Corps awarded a \$15.5 million contract to Miami Marine Services to prepare the site and remove



Union Street Dam FishPass
November 25, 2024 12:03 PM



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rocks from the river bed. The contractor will partner with Milwaukee-based Michels Construction. It's the first of three construction phases that will install defenses there to keep the fish from getting past the crucial choke point. Those tools include noisemakers, a bubble curtain, an electric barrier and a flushing lock.

Looking forward to the fishing shows in Detroit, Novi and Grand Rapids and the booths that will be manned by MSSFA chapter officers recruiting new members and sharing the programing and events planned for 2025 across the state. Our sport is flourishing with more anglers joining our ranks as Michigan enjoys some of the best salmon, steelhead and walleye fishing in the country.

Grand Rapids Steelheaders in Action...

By Rebecca Goettl

During this past year, the Grand Rapids Chapter has been out and about in the community. From the youth in school program, to the elderly in retirement initiative, we have helped spread the joy of fishing. Our club members put together some lesson plans for a few class days, and the Sacred Heart students learned how fragile and precious our waterways are, how much invasive species impact our natural resources, and the joy of fishing. If you think the students are not listening, ask a few questions. You would be amazed with their answers. Their retention of info about sea lamprey and invasive mussel facts is gratifying. It is exciting to see their eyes light up with the newly discovered information. The best part of this community outreach is being able to take the group of students out for



Double D Outing

first-hand experience. It is surprising to see these kids go from watching one of us bait their hook to them digging for the biggest worm and being able to thread the worm

on themselves. The smiles on their faces as they reel in their very first fish is worth all the effort it takes to get them out on the dock. Many laughs were shared as adults and friends helped

untangle someone's line for the 15th time, explained that you have to be patient and wait for the fish to bite, or having to fix the tangled mess from the same student's reel for the 3rd

time. As the kids ate their lunch, they chatted with the whole group. They all

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are taken on inland waters, it is clear that the \$40 million figure is only the tip of the iceberg.

Considering that there were roughly 1.18 million licensed recreational anglers in Michigan in 2023, we could divide the total fillet value by the number of licenses and say that the average Michigan angler harvests \$33.90 worth of Great Lakes fillets per year. This seems like a good place to start in terms of demonstrating the value of food procured through recreational fishing in Michigan, but it does not tell the whole story. Inland fisheries are likely to contribute even more to offsetting the cost of buying seafood at retail prices. Inland fisheries are also generally, but not always, less expensive to access.

Fishing beyond fun

Salmon fishing in river mouths provides one low-cost option for tapping into the abundance of our Great Lakes fisheries, but there are plenty of others. Shore anglers in Michigan have a wealth of options for low-cost access, from piers and public parks to state and national forest land. Even so, a lack of publicly accessible shoreline is an issue in some areas.

A new effort is underway to shine a light on "Fishing Beyond Fun," which aims to focus more research attention on shore fishing for Great Lakes species. Eventually, this may lead to a more comprehensive understanding of gaps in access. The effort should also improve our understanding of the benefits that fishing provides, not only in terms of food value but also in terms of mental health and strengthening community, cultural, and family ties.

Recreational angling provides over \$40 million in fish fillets for anglers each year. Most probably don't think too much about the dollar value, though. The experience of harvesting food from local waters gives us a sense of connection to our environment and sharing that food with loved ones completes a cycle that is as old as humanity itself.

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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.

MSSFA chapters have membership meetings with guest speakers to learn about all the aspects of sport fishing. MSSFA chapters also sponsor fishing clinics, seminars, sport-fishing shows, derbies and tournaments. And are active sponsors for fishing outings for kids, seniors, veterans and our handicapped.

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

With a common goal, and a close working partner with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, MSSFA helps to enhance the resource and sport fishing in our rivers, streams, inland lakes, and of course the mighty Great Lakes. MSSFA is a front-runner at all levels of the legislature and in courtrooms, and has spent countless hours working behind the scenes and attending hearings.

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THE GREAT LAKES SPORT FISHING NEWS (GLSFN)

The Great Lakes Sport Fishing News is owned and operated by The Michigan Steelhead and Salmon Fishermen's Association.

Better than fifty years ago, The Michigan Steelhead and Salmon Fishermen's Association began to publish a magazine called the "Guide to Great Lakes Sport Fishing". Five years later the magazine became a monthly format called "The Great Lakes Steelheader". Today the newspaper is called "**The Great Lakes Sport Fishing News**".

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 its **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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Above: Author Denny Bobeldyk, Randy Freeza, and Ed Steenwyk after a great day on the water.
Below Right: Rod Ball shows off some shallow water beauties.

“Success”

Continued from page 4

the month of June. During the Spring months the fish are usually stacked up in that shallow water and are easier to locate and catch. Also personally, I target the silver fish in the summer. Kings, Coho and Steelhead are sought after in earnest. I am not big on filling my cooler with lake trout. I find the silver fish are more fun to catch and eat. But you can't eat them if you can't find them.

So why was 2024 different than other years? For some reason I decided to change tactics and do more shallow water fishing in the summer. On one trip I remember going in tight and finding tons of fish. I had been fishing deeper with not much to show for it. Moved inside and the rods started popping. I targeted the 60 to 90 feet range more often this year than any other year that I've fished Lake Michigan. I was very surprised to find good numbers of Salmon in this shallow water even when the water temperature was warmer than the fish would have liked. I can't

tell you the reason for this but I found good numbers of fish that would bite in this zone. I marked many fish in the shallow water that would bite until 10 or 11 o'clock in the morning. Most mornings the fish would scatter after 11 o'clock and marks on the graph would disappear. A typical morning would see boats flying past me in pursuit of the deep bite in much deeper water. Many mornings my boat would be the only boat in this shallow water. If we did not find fish my fishing partners would suggest that we should be fishing deeper with all the other boats in the pack. I had to explain to them that there was a reason for this irrationality! There were days when I thought I was nuts fishing this shallow water. Sometimes we had to move between the 60- and 90-foot range before we found them. These fish would migrate in and out of this water. Then it was a matter of going north or south to find them. There were a couple of days where I wished I had fished deeper, but overall, we did very well in this 60-to-90-foot range. By staying patient, we were able to

catch good numbers of Kings and Coho. Most days I would stay in there and peck away at them. Every day was different.

Most of the time I found fish willing to bite in the bottom third of the water column. This was not from a blow from the north or a hard east wind. This was a stable weather period which sometimes lasted a couple of weeks straight. Granted, at times there were remnants of cold water there inside that 60-to-90-foot range. But a lot of times the water temperature was higher than most Salmon would like. We caught fish with the water temperature in the 50's and 60's. Again, it was amazing to be catching fish where they weren't supposed to be. I will not get into specifics on how we caught those fish. Lead core and riggers worked well. We found a good number of Kings and Coho in this shallow water. I decided to target this shallow water most of the summer. I rarely fished over the 100 ft depth. I also had my most productive season over the course of the last six to seven years. It was so much easier to

catch and find these fish in the shallow water. I am not saying you shouldn't go deep. There are many fish to be found out there also. This tactic just worked for me this year. Next year will find me trying this tactic again. Hoping it will produce in 2025. I burned a lot less fuel in the boat and my cooler had fish that I could donate to my friends. I suggest you give this tactic a try. I hope you find success like I did in 2024. Best wishes for a safe and successful season in 2025!



“Au Sable”
Continued from page 1

hydro facilities and contributed to riverine conservation projects. Conversely, Consumers Energy and its stockholders have reaped the benefits from these facilities since 1912 and controlled the future and fortune of the Au Sable River. As historically significant as these dams and hydro facilities are, another monumental era is coming to an end in the Au Sable Valley. Consumers Energy has indicated that these facilities are no longer profitable and that, moving forward, they will require significant maintenance funding. It is, therefore, not a surprise that CE is seriously looking at the disposition of these facilities, almost 10 years before the termination of the existing Federal Energy Regulatory Commission licensing agreement. CE “is taking under consideration three options—the continuation of the operations, the removal of the facilities and the sale of the facilities to another qualified owner/operator.”

It is inconceivable that Consumers Energy will continue the operation of their dams, having a total output of 50 megawatts of sellable power, balanced against costs they have estimated at \$1.5 billion to maintain operations through another licensing period. With the first option likely to be off the table, the disposition process is really coming down to a decision to either remove the dams or sell the hydro facilities to another owner/operator.

Although the dam removal process would be an arduous task spanning decades to complete, the results would be spectacular for the Au Sable River and its communities. This effort would provide tremendous goodwill for Consumers Energy, completing the circle of prosperity they created. A free flowing Au Sable River system would be a wonder we can now only dream about and it would have the support and assistance of the conservation community.

The last option Consumers Energy is considering is the sale of its hydro electric facilities to another owner/operator with CE buying the power back via a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) as an enticement to support the new owners. In the opinion of many, the sale of the dams is truly the worst case scenario for their disposition, and here is a brief explanation of the red flags associated with it. CE is a publicly regulated utility that can seek cost-recovery for capital improvements through the Michigan Public Service Commission for increases in power rates. Therefore, there has always been an incentive for CE to make necessary dam safety improvements knowing that they will be reimbursed for these costs. However, this cost-recovery mechanism

for capital investments will no longer be an option under the CE proposed terms of sale. Under the terms of the proposed sale, CE will sell all its assets associated with the hydro facilities including land and physical infrastructure in exchange for a long-term Power Purchase Agreements between itself and the new owner. Under such an arrangement the new owner will not be able to seek cost-recovery by passing on the costs of any capital investments for dam safety as they arise. The new owner will no longer be considered a publicly regulated utility by nature of its PPA with CE. The new owner then is simply a private energy producer selling the power back to CE. This situation is a major red flag as the new owner will have no incentive to make long-term investments in the dams; rather, any capital outlays would be disincentives cutting into the revenue stream the new owners gets from CE through the PPA.

Boyce Hydro Power LLC bought the Sanford and Edenville dams as well

The recent disaster caused by the failure of the Edenville and Sanford Dams are a textbook example of what can happen when a private dam is sold and should give pause to the sale of any older hydroelectric facilities through a Power Purchase Agreement.

as two others in the area as a tax shelter in 2006 and was later ordered, as were previous owners, by FERG to build new spillways to prevent the possibility of a dam failure in the event of a heavy rainstorm. Boyce Hydro Power claimed that they could not afford to make the needed improvements and their license to generate power was finally revoked after 12 years of haggling with the FERG in 2018. The regulation of the dam then reverted to the state of Michigan. In the meantime, no one made the needed improvements to the dam and, during an epic rainstorm in May of 2020, the Edenville Dam failed due to liquefaction. It also caused the failure of the downstream Sanford Dam and resulted in \$200,000,000 in flood damages plus hundreds of millions more to reconstruct the dams. The rebuilding process and court litigation will continue for another decade.

What is the lesson to be learned from the Edenville and Sanford Dam failures? Briefly, it is that there are a lot of older dams, such as those owned by Consumers Energy, that have outlived their usefulness as power providers. The

“Au Sable”
Continued on page 13

Holland

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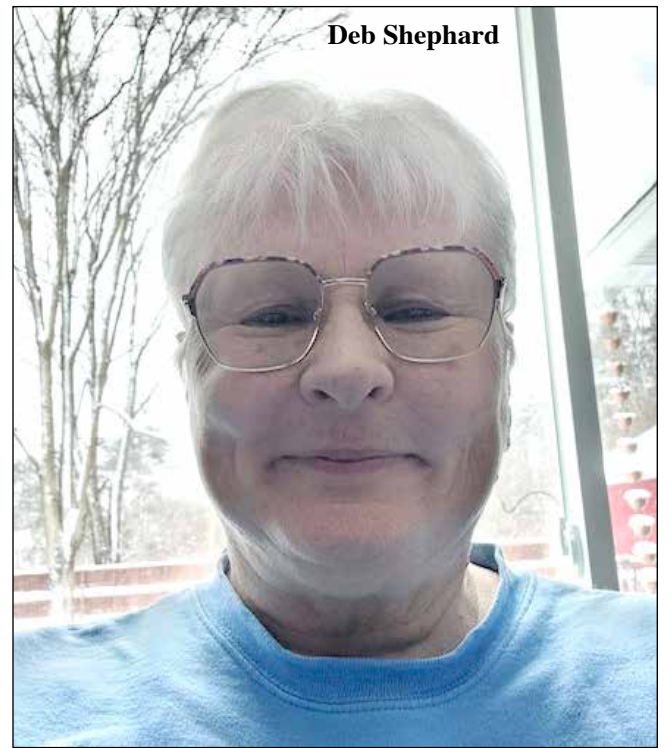
Membership Coordinator Retiring

By Dennis Eade

Deb Shephard is retiring after twenty years of service to MSSFA! Deb was the Editor in Chief of the Great Lakes Sport Fishing News for thirteen years and then MSSFA coaxed her out of her initial retirement to stay on as membership coordinator for the next seven years. Finally, she is getting the chance to relax and enjoy the many other activities and hobbies she has without the

encumbrance of a daily job responsibility. We are more than appreciative for her service to MSSFA and grateful for her dedication to the Michigan Steelhead-

ers. Rebecca Goettl, who currently serves as the Grand Rapids chapter director, will be replacing Deb as of January 1, 2025. Be sure to note the change in address and contact information when mailing membership information to MSSFA.



Deb Shephard

2025 Tentative Print Schedule		
Issue	Deadline	Print Date
1	12/11/24	01/03/25
2	02/14/25	03/03/25
3	04/11/25	05/02/25
4	06/13/25	07/01/25
5	08/15/25	08/29/25
6	10/11/25	11/04/25

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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

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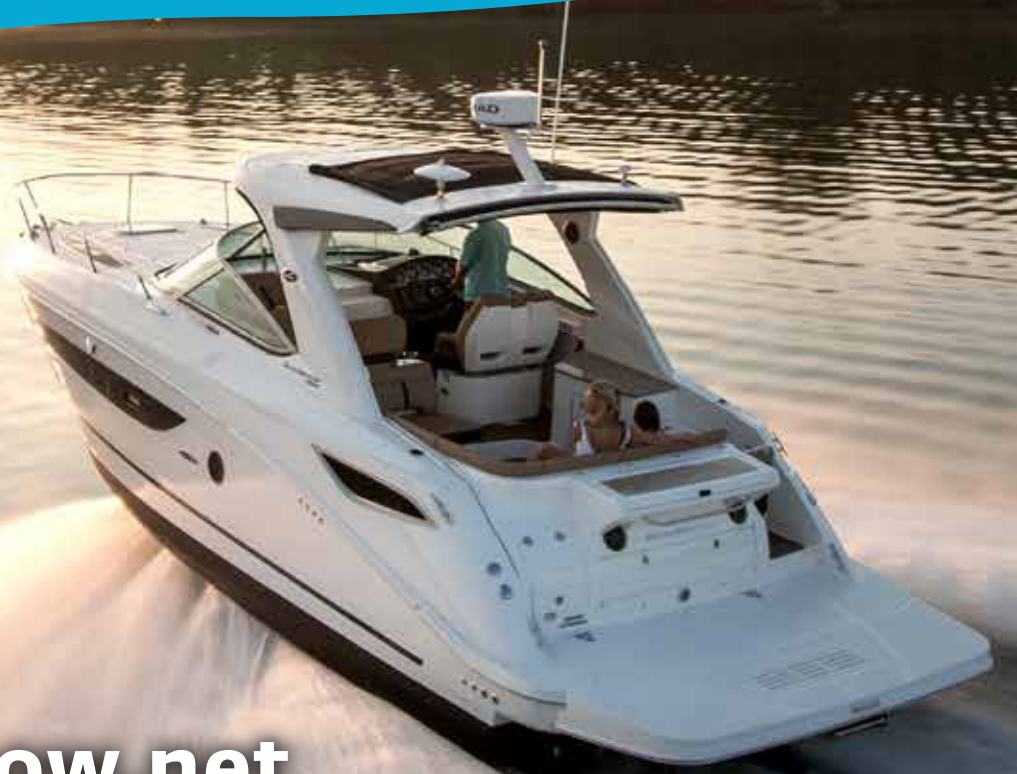
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2025 Saugatuck Fishing Tournament

“The Barge and Ship and Shore Motel”

Big Lake Classic

The Saugatuck Sport Fishing association invite you to join us for this exciting weekend for a get away that is rich in relaxing, fun and recreation. Come and walk the boardwalk in the downtown area and see all the happenings of the Fishing Tournament and visit many of the businesses that help sponsor this annual event.

The 2025 Saugatuck – “The Barge and Ship and Shore Motel” Big Lake Classic will be held on Friday, August 8th – Sunday, August 10th. Boats will be allowed to stay and leave each day from any of the following Ports: Saugatuck, South Haven and Holland. Please call early and reserve your slip.

The Saugatuck Sport Fishing Association committee would like to thank all of the people for coming to Saugatuck for the 2024 Tournament – Unfortunately the weather did not allow us to fish any of the three(3) days planned for the Tournament.

We are so hopeful for good weather for the 2025 Tournament as we will be having bigger payouts for both the Pro and AM divisions:

Pro Division – 1st Place will be \$10,000 as in the past. We will pay 2nd – 7th place finishing teams and these payouts will be increased significantly from years past.

Am Division – 1st Place will be increased to \$6,000. 2nd - place will be increased as well.

NEW: for the 2025 One Day “Spectators Pre-tournament Shootout”. There will now be two divisions in the Spectators Shootout – The Regular Division and NEW “Women’s and Youth Division.” In the women’s and Youth division 1st Place will pay \$1,000 Sponsored by Bellman Oil Co.

RULES: Friday August 8th – Set lines at 6:00am, DNR Rules. Weigh in will be at Spectators Restaurant on Blue Star Highway just north of Saugatuck, Bring your 5 biggest fish. Must be in line by 2:00pm. Entry fee \$100 per boat. 100% payback for the regular event and \$1000 to 1st place in Women’s and Youth Division. Check the box on the Entry form or contact a committee member by 6:00am Friday August 9th. (Women’s and Youth division teams may also participate in the regular division with paid entry into both events.) (Youth is 16 years old and under)

2025: Dual Port Tournament- South Haven and Saugatuck – Overall scores from both Tournaments will be combined and a winner will be Awarded the Dual Port Tournament Champion! Daily Prizes

for both Tournaments will be awarded each day to participating teams. Both Pro boats and AM boats will be eligible to enter this Dual event. Watch for more information on both South Haven and Saugatuck Websites for this event soon. (100 point scoring system will be used in both Port Tournaments)

The 8th Annual “DENNY ALLEN MEMORIAL” big fish contest will have a guaranteed first place payout of \$2,000 if that boat is entered in the Tournament in either the Pro or Am division. If just in the Big Fish Tournament, first place will be \$1,000. This Big Fish event is Sponsored by Barber Ford of Holland, Mi. All boats can enter this special event in which any and all boats can try for that ONE big fish over the two-day tournament, one fish may be weighed per day. \$50 entry and 15 places will be paid. A boat may enter this contest without participating in the Pro or Amateur division if they so desire.

The 2025 Barge and Ship and Shore Motel Big Lake Classic Tournament is planned for Saturday, August 9th and Sunday, August 10th, with the captains meeting Friday, August 8th in Saugatuck. Boats will be able to dock and leave and return to their docks in Saugatuck, Holland and South Haven. Available slips in Saugatuck fill up fast. Please contact the dockmasters at Seargents Marine or contact committee members for assistance in getting your slip for the 2024 Tournament.

The Saugatuck Tournament is put on by Sportsmen for Sportsmen and is a non-profit organized event. Monies raised for the tournament from sponsors and entries are put toward the payout to tournament, Salmon in The Classroom and the Net Pen Project.

Contact the 2025 Tournament Director John Watson with questions regarding the 2025: The Barge and Ship and Shore Motel Big Lake Classic at 616-218-6686 or email: 1137watson@gmail.com, or check out our website www.saugatucksportsfishing.com

SAUGATUCK/ SOUTH HAVEN DUAL PORT CHALLENGE



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Northfin:
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Best Chance too:
 Dave Engel – Saugatuck
Winn and Angel:
 Winn Wolf – St Joe



Saugatuck/South Haven Challenge Winners 2023



Winter Challenge Winner Steve Miller with Joe Montella



Scott Miltibarger 2nd place



3rd place winner Jerry Link with Joe Montella

Individual Name	Chapter	Fish 1
Steve Miller	SW	9.04
Scott Miltibarger	SW	8.78
Jerry Link	SW	8.7
Ken Kozminski	SW	8.47
Jerry Link	SW	8.29

* Joel Devries	16.32	Lake Trout
* Steve Nye	3.08	Walleye



Southwest Michigan Chapter Retains "Winter Challenge" Trophy

By Ryan McCartney

The 35th Annual Southwest Michigan Steelheaders "Winter Challenge" River Tournament was once again held on the St. Joseph River on December 7th. The weather was cold and windy but didn't dissuade the 56 participants from turning out. Weigh in was held at Babes in Benton Harbor.

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. SW Michigan Chapter anglers did well landing the top five fish. Steve Miller took first place with a 9.04 lb. steelhead, followed by Scott Miltibarger at 8.78 lbs., Jerry Link with an 8.7 pounder, Ken Kozminski with an 8.47 fish and Jerry Link again with an 8.29 lb. steelhead. The traveling trophy was presented to the SW Michigan Chapter again this year. The coveted Walt Tober Award for big fish by a SW Member went to Steve Miller and other award winners were Joel Devries for a 16.32 lb. Lake Trout and Steve Nye for a 3.08 lb. walleye.

We would like to thank Tackle Haven, The Fishing Hole, Mike's Custom Rods and Highs Marine for their sponsorship, and the members that helped with this event and of course all of the participants.... see you all next year.

The Southwest Michigan Steelheaders



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“Au Sable”
Continued from page 8

costs for major upgrades to these facilities cannot be met even if the new owners may have good intentions, resulting in the probability of bankruptcy and ultimate dam failure. Could this scenario happen to the Consumers Energy dams? It is not likely if CE owns and maintains the dams, but what happens if they sell them or give them to an unsuspecting community unprepared to handle the long-term cost.

This is how that scenario might look. A new owner is deemed qualified to take over the dam operations by CE and FERC and can rely on CE to buy the generated power. What appears to be, a win-win situation for the seller, the buyer and the status quo of the dam operations has some serious risk! What if the new owner is just using the dam to “mine” its last bit of usefulness as a portfolio enhancement? What happens 10 to 15 years from now when environmental conditions, dam safety issues or regulatory changes force major updates and renovations beyond the capacity of that owner and they can not seek recovery of those costs through rate hikes? Is CE going to buy power at a rate equal to the \$1.5 billion they have estimated it would have to spend to continue operations through the next contract cycle? Probably not and the rate payers should be alarmed if they do. The answer is that the new owner will extract as much revenue as it can before declaring bankruptcy and walk away from the facility. Doesn't this sound remarkably like the Edenville failure and could history repeat itself before the federal and state regulators act?"

There are so many negative factors and risks associated with the sale of the CE hydro-electric facilities to a private owner that it is hard to wrap your arms around the possibility! Isn't an orderly removal of the dams a better scenario than wondering what might happen? Isn't a free-flowing river better option than neglected facilities, poor operation, raging torrents loss of life and property and decade of litigation? Ultimately, there are multitudes of serious questions to be answered if the dams are sold. Who will be responsible for the end game removal of the dams? Will the new owners be good stewards of the river? Will the new owners be forced to meet the requirements of the Clean Water Act? Real concerns and many other with no answers as of now.

It will be interesting to see if Consumers Energy chooses to exit their responsibilities and liabilities by selling the facilities, taking the easy way out, instead of being the better steward of the resource

Isn't an orderly removal of the dams a better scenario than wondering what might happen? Isn't a free-flowing river a better option than neglected facilities, poor operation, raging torrents, loss of life and property and decades of litigation?

they have used for over 110 years. Who would be better than CE to continue operations, gradually removing the dams and disposing of the vast real estate holdings they possess? The fact that CE is exploring the sale of the dams, whether as due diligence or a diversion tactic, does not

ethically relieve them as the most suitable organization to remove or continue operation of the dams. Sale of the Consumers Energy hydro facilities via a PPA would be a classic example of corporate and regulatory agency short sightedness, and certainly the worst case scenario for the disposition of the dams and the future of a free flowing Au Sable River system, as it once was.

Isn't it about time that we make rivers the priority? Isn't it about time to safely give them back to nature and to the people that enjoy and them?

Time will tell.... stay vigilant.



Consumers Energy's license to generate hydropower at the Alcona Dam, on the Au Sable River, expires in 2034. The company is now considering selling Alcona and 12 other dams that generate small amounts of expensive power.

(Bridge photo by Kelly House, www.bridgemi.com)



Only YOU Can Save The Buoys!

The Port Sheldon buoy and the South Haven buoy play a key role in boater safety and successful angler outings on Lake Michigan. The buoys provide real-time data on wave height and frequency, wind speed and direction, and water temperatures from the surface to 70 feet below. Originally deployed in 2014 through a grant from NOAA, these buoys have provided critical life-safety and fishery environment information, enabling us to be better at our sport and to be safer while fishing.

Anyone can access the information generated by the buoys at any time through a text or on the internet. The valuable data created is all free of charge to the public, but each one of these buoys cost nearly \$15,000 per year to operate. There is no longer any government funding for these buoys; all funds to continue their operation come from individuals, organizations, and local businesses passionate about Lake Michigan.

On one hand, the cost to maintain these buoys is significant. But on the other hand we have hundreds of teams and thousands of anglers on the Trail. That means the math is on our side! By working together we can cover at least a big chunk of that cost if not the whole thing! So I'm challenging you to step up and help! Just before we went to print I made a \$50 donation to each Buoy and I hope you'll follow suit.

There is an individual fundraiser for each buoy. They are being run by the South Haven and the Holland Steelheaders - people we know, people who fish the Trail, people we can trust! Donating is simple! In fact you can do it right now! Just use your phone and scan one or both of the codes below.



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Water | Scientists
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Great Lakes Hold Clues to Climate Change. Send In The Robots, Feds Say

Georgia Hill,
Great Lakes Echo
www.bridgemi.com

As climate change increasingly shapes the Great Lakes region's ecology and economy, scientists plan to use underwater robots to gather previously inaccessible data they say will help communities adapt.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration announced in September that its Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory received \$1.9 million through the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

It's one of three NOAA labs that received \$6.7 million in total for ocean and Great Lakes observing systems, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce, which includes the agency.

In a press release, Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo said the funding "will help NOAA improve and expand climate and weather services so that communities are better prepared to tackle the impacts of climate change."

A portion of the funding will allow GLERL and partners to deploy autonomous underwater vessels to monitor more of the Great Lakes ecosystem during a greater portion of the year than earlier technology allowed. The funding will also augment long-term

tracking of water temperatures by increasing the number of moored heat sensors in the lakes. Together the technologies will allow scientists to gather data when the lakes are frozen over, according to NOAA.

That's crucial for adapting to climate-driven changes in the lakes because their temperature influences the growth of toxic algae blooms, the health of fisheries and even local precipitation patterns, said Craig Stow, a GLERL scientist and one of the project's lead researchers. "Water temperature affects everything," Stow said.

The new project will grow the network of sensors that GLERL has used to monitor Great Lakes water temperatures for three decades.

"With these autonomous vehicles, we can compare longstanding data with a larger spatial area, particularly under the ice during winter, which is something we've never really been able to do before," said Steve Ruberg, who leads NOAA's Observing Systems and Advanced Technology branch and is the other primary researcher on the project.

Other technology for collecting data in the Great Lakes was not designed to withstand winter temperatures and has to be hauled



Autonomous vehicle docking stations allow the robots to recharge their batteries without human assistance. Credit: NOAA

out each fall to prevent damage, Ruberg said. That has created a gap in field data from the winter. Using autonomous vehicles, researchers will be able to collect data under the lake ice to help close that gap.

The new robots can rove far, wide and deep in the lakes, following either pre-programmed instructions or input from operators who tell them where and what to sample. Using the vessels' internal navigation system and acoustic beacons, scientists can keep track of their movements

and pinpoint their location even at great depths. The robots can also autonomously dock at charging stations to recharge their batteries.

"The autonomous vehicles are great because you're not just getting the observations in one location, you're getting them from all over," Ruberg said.

Along with temperature, the vehicles will track water quality and chlorophyll levels, which indicate what's happening at the base of the food web, with implications for fish popu-

lations.

"Understanding how the temperature of the water is changing through time is extremely informative to folks that manage these fisheries, and everyone who depends on them for jobs and livelihoods," said Greg Dick, director of the Cooperative Institute for Great Lakes Research. The institute and Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution are providing the new vessels.

The data NOAA provides can help commercial fishers adapt to changing

conditions, Dick said. Better temperature data also can help communities become more resilient to climate change. And cities that rely on the lakes for drinking water can use the data to ensure the safety and well-being of their communities, he said.

Information the project gathers will be available to the public on GLERL's website and other platforms, such as the Great Lakes Observing System, which provides real-time data for boaters and anglers.

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August 8-10
- Manistee**
August 15-17
- Frankfort**
August 21-24



Grand Rapids Steelheaders: Fishing Derby with the Grand Rapids Veterans Home

**“Grand Rapids”
Continued from page 6**

agreed that it was a fun program, and some of them said they would definitely be fishing with a family member in the future.

From school-aged to the retirees, the Steelheaders brought smiles to a small group of people at Clark’s Retirement Home. This is the second year GRSH has hosted the Retiree Outing. The afternoon of fishing with them brought back memories of childhood and family outings. The four Steel header members, plus one 6-year-old tag- along were treated to many of these stories. The fishing was not very successful, but the friendships and laughter was abundant. As we gathered for lunch, one or two of the elders spoke of fish boils they had attended in their younger days.

Out of this conversation, another event came together... Fish Boil for Clark Residents.... A joint meeting with the Grand Haven Chapter of MSSFA resulted in a plan to do a fish boil. The weekly fishing league supplied the main ingredient, and a trip to the farmers market yielded fresh onion, potatoes and corn on the cob. The day of the event, GR and GH presidents, along with a few side-kicks, set up pots to boil, peeled/cut veggies, and dropped the full baskets down to cook. Seasoned to perfection, it didn’t take

long for the 50plus guests to line up at the buffet tables. Twenty or so pounds of fish, five pounds of onions, twelve pounds of potatoes, three dozen ears of corn, and over eight pounds of butter resulted in a group of retirees stuffed to the gills and wiping butter off their smiling faces. As we cleaned up our cooking area, people would filter out on the veranda to compliment the cooks, ask questions about the fish they had enjoyed and share tales of their Wisconsin/ Alabama/Louisiana fish boil experiences. Seeing their eyes twinkle, listening to them recount years gone by, and the genuine joy from this festive feast was enough to make one proud to be part of the Steelheaders.

The Grand Rapids chapter not only helps with fishing education; we also support our community. This year we were happy

we could donate to Toys for Tots, God’s Kitchen, and help at the Sportsman for Youth event, to name a few. We also try to keep our members active within the group by hosting some awesome member outings, and we have some great speakers at our monthly club meetings. Grand Rapids has a diverse group of outdoor sports enthusiasts; from big lake to inland lakes to the miles of river fishing, we cover all areas. If you are interested in becoming a member, or want to know how to become involved, reach out to a MSSFA chapter near you.



Salmon in the Classroom release in the Grand River near Lowell



Future Salmon and Trout Incoming!

Fall and winter egg-take efforts wrapping up at DNR facilities

Michigan DNR

Every year, the Department of Natural Resources stocks fish in Michigan waters to provide fishing opportunities and maintain healthy ecosystems. Where do these stocked fish come from? It all starts with collecting fish eggs, and the DNR has been working hard this fall gathering the necessary eggs to produce fish for stocking. Fall egg collections have been completed for wild Chinook and coho salmon and for captive broodstocks of brown, brook and lake trout, and rainbow trout egg collection will soon begin.

Chinook salmon eggs were collected Oct. 1–16 at the Little Manistee River Weir. Eggs and milt (sperm) are gathered from fish during the annual salmon run. At the weir, salmon swim up a fish ladder and into holding ponds. From there, fish are brought into the facility, where eggs and milt are collected and the eggs are fertilized.

“We experienced a solid

run of wild Chinook salmon this year,” said Aaron Switzer, Fish Production Program manager. “The run at the Little Manistee was healthy enough to provide all of Michigan’s egg needs. We were also able to provide eggs to Indiana and Illinois state-owned fish hatcheries. Once hatched, reared and stocked all of these Chinook salmon contribute to the Lake Michigan salmon fishery.”

Coho salmon eggs were collected at the Platte River State Fish Hatchery Weir from Oct. 15 to Nov. 1.

“We collected nearly 6.5 million coho salmon eggs at the Platte River weir by the time the egg collection wrapped up. This includes approximately 3 million for Indiana, Illinois and Wisconsin. All four states work together cooperatively each year to ensure Lake Michigan continues to receive Pacific salmon to supplement the fishery,” said Switzer.

Not all egg collections are of wild fish, however. Captive broodstocks, fish

kept at a hatchery to produce eggs and milt, will provide many of the eggs that will later become stocked fish: 378,000 brook trout eggs, 448,000 lake trout eggs, 2.6 million brown trout eggs and 1.5 million rainbow trout eggs. An additional 422,000 splake eggs (brook trout and lake trout hybrid) will also be collected from captive broodstock to support Michigan’s fisheries management objectives.

At Oden State Fish Hatchery, egg collections for brown trout occurred through mid-October. Rainbow trout egg collections at Oden will begin in December and continue until mid-January. These captive egg collections will occur every one to two weeks over the season. Captive broodstock egg collections for brook and lake trout at Marquette State Fish Hatchery have already been completed.

To learn more about Michigan’s state fish hatcheries or to plan a trip to see behind the scenes, visit Michigan.gov/Hatcheries.



Coho salmon eggs were collected at the Platte River State Fish Hatchery Weir from Oct. 15 to Nov. 1.



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Back From The Brink: Once Near Extinction, Lake Trout Are Officially Recovered in Lake Superior

by Kelly House
www.bridgemi.com

Seven decades after overfishing and invasive species nearly wiped them off the map, Lake Superior's lake trout population has finally recovered.

That's the conclusion of a binational group of tribal, US and Canadian species managers, who announced the milestone Wednesday in light of data that shows the self-sustaining population today is roughly as big as it was in the 1930s, before overfishing and invasive sea lamprey devastated the fish.

The group, known as the Lake Superior Committee, celebrated the recovery as testament to the progress that can be achieved when competing interest groups set aside their differences to work toward a common goal.

The recovery announcement may not be all that surprising to Lake Superior anglers — the local lake trout have been doing well for quite some time.

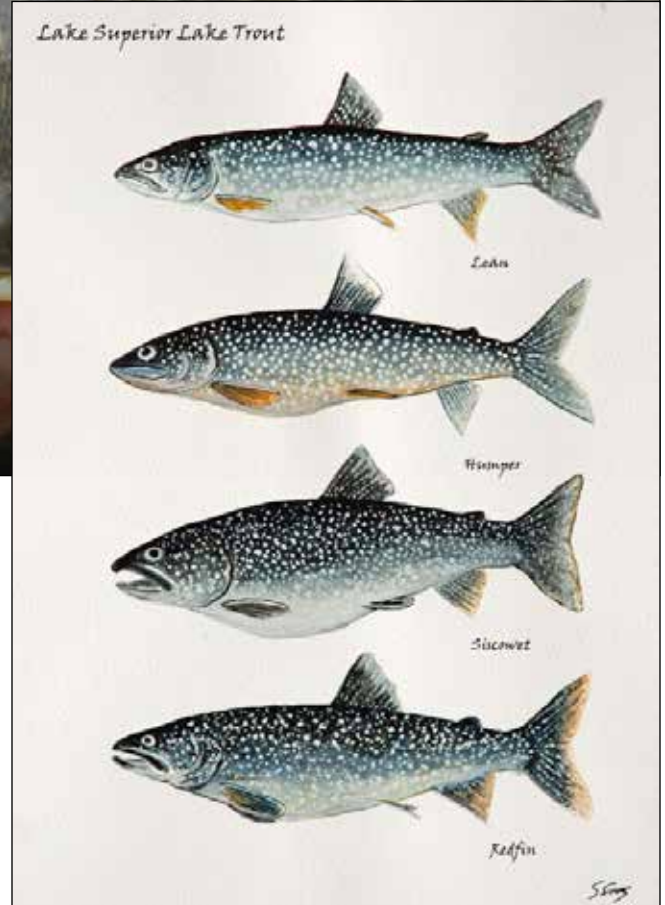
"It's probably been 20 years that we've been in a



Above: An adult lake trout. Fishery managers have declared the fish species recovered in Lake Superior. (Photo by Katie Steiger-Meister/USFWS)

Right: Lake Superior Lake Trout, a painting by Stephen Emms

You may purchase this painting at <https://fineartamerica.com/featured/lake-superior-lake-trout-stephen-emms.html>



pretty decent place," said Dave Caroffino, a fisheries biologist in the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and vice chair of

the Lake Superior Committee.

But recent analyses of fish population data allowed species managers to

officially declare victory.

It's a massive turnaround for a fish once on the brink of extinction. Amid fishing pressure and

the proliferation of lamprey that arrived in the Great Lakes via human-made shipping canals, annual harvests plummeted from historic averages of about 4 million pounds to just 210,000 pounds in 1964.

"They were on the edge of disappearing," said Bill Mattes, Great Lakes section leader for the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission and chair of the Lake Superior Committee.

"Managers felt the fishermen might as well fish, because they're going to be gone anyway."

The crisis led the governments of the US and Canada to form the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, a body tasked with reigning in overfishing and finding a way to control sea lamprey.

The game-changer: A 1958 discovery that the chemical compound 3-trifluoromethyl-4'-nitrophenol, or TFM, was capable of killing lamprey without significantly affecting other species. For decades since, rivers throughout the Great Lakes have been regularly treated with the chemicals.

Stricter fishing regulations and a hatchery-raised fish stocking program also aided the recovery, eventually allowing naturally reproducing fish to repopulate the lake.

ably swift. The average lake trout doesn't begin reproducing until it's about 9 years old and lives to age 40. That means it's only been five generations since the collapse.

Today, there's no need to regularly stock lake trout in Lake Superior. But regular lampricide treatments will remain necessary.

"We've been able to drive [lamprey] down to 10% of their non-controlled level, but that 10% still takes a significant number of fish," Mattes said. "So we need to keep that control up."

Today, fishery managers estimate Lake Superior's self-sustaining trout population is at least as large as it was in 1938, before sea lamprey arrived. Populations in the other four Great Lakes are not so robust.

Lake Trout recovery efforts are still ongoing in lakes Michigan, Huron, Erie and Ontario, with some encouraging signs in parts of lakes Michigan and Huron. But those lakes also contend with invasive mussels and alewives that can't gain a foothold in Lake Superior's frigid waters.

It's unclear whether lake trout can thrive despite the onslaught. But Mattes said there's reason to hold out hope.

"Lake trout are a very resilient species," he said. "If given the chance, they can do well."

What happens now?

Seven decades may seem like a long time, but to Mattes, the lake trout recovery has been remark-

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Winter Fishing: 5 Common Mistakes Anglers Make

Catching open-water fish in the cold months isn't always easy, but you can increase your odds by remembering these tips

By Joe Cermele
www.outdoorlife.com

If you live in the northern part of the country, odds are good that you have consistent ice coverage on your local lakes and ponds in winter. You're lucky, because it means you can save your sanity by hitting the hardwater. But for many anglers—myself included—who live in areas where the water stays open most of the winter despite colder temperatures, fishing becomes a challenge. Many anglers simply hang it up after the fall. While it's hard to deny that opportunities diminish during the winter, they're certainly not gone until spring. Winter fishing can be productive, but you've got to be prepared.

That means having both an understanding of what the fish are doing and choosing your days and times wisely. Here are five of the most common mistakes I see winter anglers make. Avoid them and you might be shocked by the action you find in the dead of winter.

You're Fishing Too Fast

Everybody loves that feeling when a trout throttles an in-line spinner zip-

ping through the hole, or a pike blasts a topwater propbait glugging along the surface at a good clip. To induce those high-powered reactions, however, conditions need to be right for the fish. They need to be feeding aggressively and willing to cover water to chase down a meal. Those are two things fish are often not interested in doing during winter.

Regardless of water

temperature, the shorter days alone are enough to slow fish down and get them into a winter pattern. Their metabolism slows, which means they don't have to feed as frequently. The good news is most gamefish do have to keep feeding despite conditions that make them sluggish. The trick is often presenting something that entices them without making them move very far. For bass,

this could be a tube, drop-shot bait, or plastic worm bounced gently in place long enough to get them to finally bite.

For pike or trout, suspend a jerkbait that will hover in place after each twitch. If you're after panfish, suspend a tiny jig under a float so it stays right in their faces. The bottom line is, you must slow down and work each area you fish methodically. If you suffer

a stream this might be a slow inside bend. Until the fish or conditions dictate a move to shallower water, it's a safe bet to start any winter mission in deeper water.

You're Not Monitoring the Weather Patterns

All fish are sensitive to atmospheric changes, and this holds true even when it's bitter cold outside. In the summer, a pending

it cold, but it makes already sluggish fish even more wary. But one rainstorm or a bit of run-off from snow-melt can change the game very quickly. A bump in flow or lake level coupled with a staining of the water can quickly move fish from deep sanctuaries to active feeding areas. They may only hang around until the clarity changes or water level drops, but I always look for high, stained conditions in winter. This can put species like pike and crappies tight to the bank for a time, as the opaque water will also absorb more heat and could bump up a degree or two in a single day. Smallmouths and trout in moving water can take the opportunity to feed aggressively before conditions change and tuck them back into their deep winter haunts.

You're Not Playing the Windows

It doesn't matter if you have ideal or brutal conditions—the odds of catching fish all day in the dead of winter are unlikely. Most of the time, on any given day, there is a feeding window. Sometimes, if you're lucky, it'll last for a few hours; other times it might last ten minutes. But it's important to understand these windows for two reasons.

For one, it helps to keep your motivation up when you realize action can go from 0 to 60 any time you're out. I've experienced this more times than I could ever count when suddenly, just when I think my numb hands can't take anymore, a flip is switched and areas I've been casting to for hours start producing fish. The other good thing about windows is that if you monitor conditions, you have better odds of figuring out when that window will open.

As an example, in clear water, I might fish closer to evening, as the low light will make fish less wary, and any radiant heat from the sun capable of notching temperatures up even slightly will have taken effect late in the day. If a winter storm is coming, ideally, I'd want to fish an hour or two before it hits. Pegging windows is never an exact science, nor will they be the same all the time. But by winter fishing through a range of conditions, you'll gain a better understanding of fitting together the puzzle pieces. When that happens, it makes braving the cold worth the effort.



A wintertime brown trout. Photo credit: Joe Cermele

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from A.D.D., this can be a challenge, but retrieve slowly, pause often, and assume there is a fish looking at your lure—it just might need another second and another twitch or shake to make it commit.

You're Winter Fishing in the Wrong Spots

I do a lot of trout fishing in the winter. On the highly pressured streams I fish, I see quite a few anglers even during the coldest months. What I also see is a lot of them race down to their favorite spring runs and employ the same tactics they would in April or May. What they don't consider is that a good hole in the spring might not be the right place in February.

To use trout as an example, they often move to areas with slower current, because the faster the water, the more energy they have to expend to hold in it. I also have a lot of success in areas with more mud or silt on the bottom than pure rock. I believe that's because mud holds more heat than stone.

Most gamefish gravitate to deep water in the winter. That's not to say they stay there all day every day (more on this in a minute), but as a general rule, no matter what you're fishing for, assume they are in deeper water holding closer to the bottom than they would be during warmer times of year. On a small lake or pond, this might be close to a spillway; on

thunderstorm often kicks off a vicious bite, as the looming front rapidly drops the barometric pressure, getting the fish on the feed. What many anglers don't understand is that atmospheric change doesn't have to be drastic to produce the same action.

If it's been bright and sunny for the last few days and the forecast calls for snow flurries, you can expect an uptick in feeding just ahead of the dusting, even if the inbound weather is short lived and not changing the overall temperature very much. Any change in weather, however slight, is a good thing. Conversely, fishing right after the change can be tough until conditions stabilize again. So, always try to fish right before a change, and then keep an eye out for stable conditions to return post change.

You're Not Watching the Water

Earlier I noted that fish tend to go deep in winter. That's true, but I've caught lots of February pickerel in a foot of water and loads of trout in shallow, fast rifles in January. So, what gives? The catalysts that will often get fish to move in winter are water color, height, and temperature.

The clearer the water, the colder it usually is, and this holds true for moving or still water.

Crystal-clear water can be incredibly challenging to fish, because not only is



Inside The Fight To Keep Invasive Grass Carp Out Of The Great Lakes

Matt McIntosh,
The Narwhal
Michigan Environment
Watch
Great Lakes, Great Lakes
News Collaborative

From the window of a fishing boat, Andrew Taves has a clear view of how Lake Erie is changing. He's been a commercial fisherman for just shy of seven years in Wheatley, Ont., which claims to be the largest freshwater commercial fishing port in the world.

Taves and his crewmates set nets primarily for the most valuable and sought-after fish — yellow perch and pickerel — as well as a couple other species of lesser value. Sometimes they catch lamprey, gobies and other invasive fish, as well as significant quantities of low-value shad — a species that's supposed to largely die off in winter, but which Taves suspects has proliferated due to warmer winter water temperatures.

Taves has yet to find grass carp in his crew's nets, but it could be just a matter of time.

The invasive fish have been caught off the coast of nearby Point Pelee National Park, Rondeau Provincial Park and elsewhere in Canadian waters. There are breeding populations of grass carp on the American side of Lake Erie. But collaboration between American and Canadian governments, research institutions and local communities have kept the species from gaining a strategic foothold.

The massive freshwater system is no stranger to invasive species, but grass carp could upend the Great Lakes ecology, as well as the operations of some of the world's most significant freshwater commercial fisheries. So far, the Great Lakes have successfully held grass carp at bay. Those involved in managing the grass carp — not to mention the fishermen who rely on the abundance of native fish — can only hope that success is sustainable.

What are Asian Carp?

Grass carp are one of four similar fish species known as Asian carp that originate in Eurasian rivers: grass, silver, big head and black carp. Each species has unique characteristics, but they can all get very big — up to 40 kilograms — and all four species are prolific eaters. Each day, carp can consume between 5% to and 10% of their body weight in microscopic plant and animal life (phytoplankton and zooplankton). Grass carp also eat rooted aquatic plants. This feeding behaviour can devastate threatened wetland environments, and the fish that rely on them for spawning and nursery activities.

Grass and other Asian carp were imported to the United States in the 1970s as a biological method of

cleaning ponds. Through flood events, dumping and other means, some eventually escaped their ponds to American lakes and rivers. There, they thrived.

With no natural predators, these species have successfully outcompeted native fish in waterways across vast swaths of the United States, most notably in parts of the Mississippi River and its tributaries. Asian carp are estimated to comprise as much as 80% of all aquatic biomass in some places, wreaking havoc on local biodiversity. The economic hit to both commercial and recreational fishing has also been profound.

Since 2007, it has been illegal to import live Asian carp to American states bordering the Great Lakes. Importing live fish to Ontario is also prohibited, but eviscerated fish can be brought in for the food market. Live imports in other parts of the United States

are still permitted, as long as the fish are rendered infertile through a treatment applied when they're newly hatched.

But whether by ineffective treatment or illegal importation, the Great Lakes region now faces a constant threat of Asian carp entering its wider ecosystem. Thus far, barriers between the Great Lakes and Mississippi basins have kept them at bay, except for grass carp — the only Asian carp species found in the Great Lakes in any significant number to date.

Grass Carp Make Their Lake Erie Debut

Chris Mayer, a professor at the Lake Erie Centre at the University of Toledo, Ohio, is a veteran in the study and control of grass carp in Lake Erie and its tributaries. Speaking to



Staff with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources are a part of a cross-border effort to catch grass carp and keep them from establishing themselves in the Great Lakes. (Photo: Supplied by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources)

“Carp”

Continued on page 19

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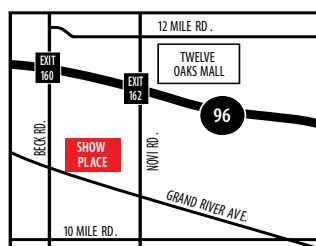
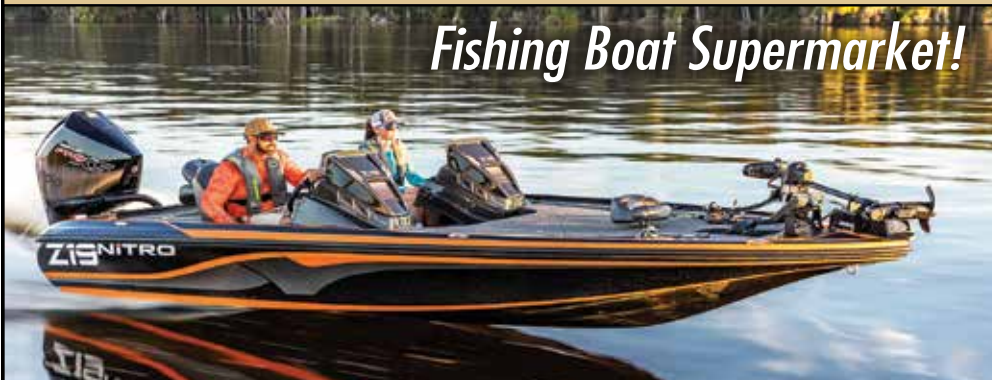


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“Carp”
Continued from page 18

journalists and fishing charter captains at Ohio State University’s Stone Laboratory in August 2024, Mayer said grass carp have been identified in Lake Erie watersheds in small numbers since the 1980s. However, they were largely infertile, and spurred little concern.

But in 2012, fertile grass carp were first identified near the mouth of Ohio’s Sandusky River, which opens into a bay of Lake Erie. The finding indicated some breeding populations had likely established themselves in parts of the Great Lakes system. This hypothesis was confirmed when, in 2015, grass carp eggs were found in the Sandusky River. In response, an inter-state surveillance and control effort began in 2017.

“There aren’t any, or many fish that eat plants that are rooted to the bottom ... This is a very unusual thing. They are very good at it, and can get very big,” Mayer said. “Our state is spending money to construct and connect wetlands to the lake. We don’t want to have this herbivore wiping out the vegetation that does good things for water quality, and provides good habitat for juvenile fish of other species.”

David Marson, manager of Fisheries and Oceans Canada’s aquatic invasive

species program, described grass carp as “machines for feeding on vegetation” that can actually consume up to 40% of their weight in rooted aquatic plants daily.

“If we had a breeding population get into Rondeau Bay or Long Point — those are highly productive, highly valuable resources for a lot of our native fish species for spawning or fish rearing habitat, or other waterfowl and things as well. We don’t want these fish getting in there and consuming a lot of that vegetation,” Marson told *The Narwhal*.

In her August presentation, Mayer was even more blunt about the current situation: “With grass carp, we are past prevention because they are here. We’re in the stage of eradication or containment.”

Gone Fishing: Catching Grass Carp is Easier Said Than Done

Mayer, Marson and many others across a wide range of political, institutional and community borders have collaborated under the Great Lakes Fishery Commission to seek and destroy grass carp wherever they are found.

The Americans maintain a constant force of people monitoring for the fish and their eggs, with a network of rapid-response fishing crews. In Ontario, Marson said four crews are employed full-time through the summer, with

reduced operations the rest of the year. There are also separate “larval crews” for monitoring eggs in at-risk waterways, as well as multi-species monitoring crews in the St. Lawrence River. Indigenous partners help monitor remote areas such as northern Lake Huron. The Ontario government also co-operates in sampling.

Currently, an average of 150 to 200 grass carp on the American side of Lake Erie are caught each year. On the Canadian side, Marson said 33 have been caught since 2012. Most of these have been infertile — but not all.

A range of methods are used to catch grass carp, including different types of nets and electrofishing — using electricity to stun fish to the surface, where they can be collected and euthanized. Captured fish are brought to laboratories and analyzed for age, fertility and other biological indicators.

Recreational anglers who catch grass carp also provide opportunities for concerted eradication efforts. Marson related one instance, where a fisherman on Lake Gibson, in Niagara, Ont., thought he landed a once-in-a-lifetime lunker, as an example why public awareness campaigns also comprise part of the cross-border control strategy.

“It was his birthday, and he was like ‘Look how

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Yellow perch and pickerel are by far the most sought-after species by Lake Erie commercial fishermen. They also catch a variety of lesser value, and often invasive, species. (Photo: Andrew Taves)

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lucky I was to catch this!’ — and released it. But we were able to track them down. They didn’t do anything wrong. They didn’t realize what they had. So, we approached them, figured out where it was and went out with our crews ... It wasn’t just one fish, it turned out to be ten fish we removed from there,” Marson said.

Mayer said determining the best fishing methods and times of year to capture grass carp is an ongoing challenge. And some areas are very hard to reach, making regular analysis a challenge. Current fishing methods are also best suited to catch grass carp that are at least four years old, while sexual maturity occurs at three years.

“They get a year of re-

production in before our methods are kicking in ... But it’s better to know we have this problem,” Mayer said. She added their analysis of captured grass carp indicates average maturity is rising over time. Fewer young fish in the population mix suggests the control efforts are having an effect in limiting reproduction.

Cautious Optimism About Keeping Grass Carp at Bay

In Canadian waters, Marson said there’s been no detection of grass carp breeding.

If grass carp were filling fishing boats every time they launched, or leaping out of the water en masse as other species of Asian carp do in the Mississip-

pi River, Mayer said, “the horse [would be] out of the barn.” Thankfully, this has not come to fruition.

But the risk of grass carp getting out of hand is still real, however, as is the risk posed by the other three Asian carp species.

“It wouldn’t take a long time. We would only need ten males and ten females, and that would be sufficient to really lead us down the road to an invasion,” Marson said.

For fishermen like Andrew Taves, it’s a very real threat that could make it challenging to earn a living on the Great Lakes.

“We already have invasive species, pollution, climate change,” Taves said. “We don’t need this.”

2025 Battle Creek Steelheader's Calendar of Events

Month	Date	Event	Location
February	22	ST.JOE RIVER TROUT QUEST	I-94 BOAT RAMP
March	8	KALAMAZOO RIVER TROUT QUEST	ALLEGAN DAM
March	22	KALAMAZOO RIVER SPRING STEELHEAD	ALLEGAN DAM
March	29	TRADE A TRIP DETROIT RIVER	LAKE ST CLAIR CLUB
April	26	TRADE A TRIP SOUTH HAVEN	RIVERBEND BOAT CLUB
May	31	CONNIE MCGOWAN INVITATIONAL CAPTAIN MUST BE MEMBER	LAKE ERIE/ DBBC
July	12	PORTAGE LK PANFISH/FAMILY PICNIC	PORTAGE LAKE
August	16	VETERANS OUTING	SOUTH HAVEN
October	25	KALAMAZOO RIVER SALMON SLAM	ALLEGAN DAM
November	8	KALAMAZOO RIVER TROUT QUEST	ALLEGAN DAM
November	15	KALAMAZOO RIVER MEMORIAL	ALLEGAN DAM
November	29	ST.JOE RIVER TUNE-UP STEELHEAD	I-94 BOAT RAMP
December	6	ST.JOE WINTER CHALLENGE	BENTON HARBOR
December	13	CHRISTMAS PARTY	KALAMAZOO EAGLES

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

2025 Grand Haven Steelheader's Calendar of Events

Month	Date	Event	Contact Info
TBD	2025	Net Pens	
April	24	Spring Meeting	
May 29 - June 1		GH Offshore Challenge	
August	1-13	Week-Long Plus Tournament	
August	14	Chapter Picnic	
September	6	Sportsman For Youth	
December	10	Chapter 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

2025 Grand Rapids Steelheader's Calendar of Events

Month	Date	Event	Information
January	TBD	Ice Fishing Outing	Wabasis Lake TBD (safe ice only)
January	27	Chapter Meeting	
February	24	Chapter Meeting	
March	13-16	Outdoor Sports Show	DeVos Place, GR
March	TBD	Spring River Fishing Outing	
March	31	Chapter Meeting	
April	1	Update of GRSH Membership, pay dues at meeting.	
April	28	Chapter Meeting	
May	TBD	Big Lake Outing	
May	19	Chapter Meeting & Awards	
June	TBD	Summer Fishing Event	Wabasis Lake
June	6-9	Lake Erie Walleye Contest STC	
June	30	Chapter Meeting	
**July	14	Chapter Family Picnic	Johnson Park
August	2	Chapter Challenge/Double D Event	
August	25	Members Meeting	
September	6	Sportsman For Youth	Muskegon
September	29	Members Meeting	
October	1	Chapter Archery Buck Contest** pre-entry required	
October	TBD	Fall River Contest	
October	27	Chapter Meeting	
November	8	Fishing Partners Manistee Contest	
November	15	Chapter Firearm Buck Contest** pre-entry required	
November	24	Chapter Meeting	
**December	TBD	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
 Dates with "*" are for members and family only

New address:
 P.O. Box 140198
 Grand Rapids, MI 49514

2025 Great Lakes Bay Region Steelheader's Calendar of Events

Month	Date	Event	
February	1	Saginaw Bay Ice Fishing	
March	22	Auction at VFW	11:00 am (Doors open at 10:00 am)
April	12	Manistee	7:00 am
April	26	Statewide	7:00 am
May	3	Linwood	7:00 am
May	17	Linwood	7:00 am
May	31	Sebewaing	7:00 am
June	14	Sebewaing - Kids Day	7:00 am
June	28	Linwood	7:00 am
July	12	Manistee	5:30 am
July	26	Ludington	5:30 am
August	9	Frankfort (Gary Decker Memorial) (2-Day)	5:30 am
August	23	Manistee (2-Day)	5:30 am
September	6	Linwood	
December	13	Banquet at VFW	5pm

Membership meetings are the first Tuesday every month (no meeting in August)
 Meetings held at: 3013 Bay City Road, Midland, MI 48642 Phone: 989-496-3410

Board meetings begin at 7:00pm. **Please call the Port Chairman no later than Monday prior to the outing whether 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 16 and Under are free. Picnic is \$5.00 for everyone.

If interested in fishing with us please contact: Mark Trudell (989) 839-4920
 Visit our web page www.steel-headers.com

2025 Holland Steelheader's Calendar of Events

Month	Date	Event
January	6	Board Meeting
February	3	Board Meeting
February	20	Membership Annual Banquet
March	3	Board Meeting
April	7	Board Meeting
April	17	Membership Meeting
May	2-4	Michigan City Tournament
May	5	Board Meeting
May	8-10	St. Joseph Tournament
May	16-18	South Haven Tournament
May	17	Spring Challenge
May	20	Tuesday Night Leagues Begin
May 29-June 1		Grand Haven Tournament
June	2	Board Meeting
June	20-22	Manistee Tri-Port Tournament
June	28	Kids & Kings Tournament
July	7	Board Meeting
July	12	Fishing With Veterans
July	14-20	Ludington Tournament
July	24-27	Muskegon Tournament
July	26	Summer Challenge
July 31 - August 3		Holland Tournament
August	4	Board Meeting
August	8-10	Saugatuck Tournament
August	15-17	Manistee (Monster) Tournament
August	16	Ladies Tournament
August	21-24	Frankfort Tournament
August	26	Tuesday Night Leagues End
September	8	Board Meeting
September	9	Tuesday Night League Banquet
October	6	Board Meeting
November	3	Board Meeting
December	1	Board Meeting
December	4	Membership Meeting

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

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

2025 Metro West - Livonia Steelheader's Calendar of Events

Month	Date	Event	Contact
January	7	General Membership Meeting	
January	9-12	Ultimate Fishing Show Novi	Marc Traver
January	18	Lake St. Clair Ice Fishing Outing	Adam Trenz
January	24	Comedy Club Fund Raising Event	Karen Westphal
February	1	Manistee/NWNW MI Rivers and Ice Fishing	Adam Trenz
February	4	General Membership Meeting	
February	20-23	OUTDOOR-RAMA Showplace Novi	Gale Frazee / Sharon Bledsoe
March	4	General Membership Meeting	
March	15	MWS Banquet	MWS Board
March	22	MI Steelhead Challenge Manistee River/Pier	Adam Trenz / Eric Braden
April	1	General Membership Mtg - Swap Meet/Awards	
April	14	Clinton River Clean Up	Jay Labban
April	14	Brown Trout Tournament Ludington	Dave Zawacki
April	19	Walleye Tour Det R/Erie	Robert Grech



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2025 Metro West... continued

Month	Date	Event	Contact
April	26	L. Huron Lexington Tournament	Bob Schulz
May	6	General Membership Meeting	
May	10	Lake Erie Walleye Tournament	Bob Schulz
May	17	Pt Mouille' Kayak/SB SM Bass/Walleye	Keith Childs
May	17	Howard Tanner Salmon Tournament Benton Harbor Sat	Chris Thompson / Dennis Kelley
May	18	Howard Tanner Salmon Tournament Benton Harbor Sun	Mark Platt / Dennis Kelley
May	24	Bruin Lake Kayak/Small Boat	Chuck Davis
May	25	Carp Fishing Event	Gale Frazee
June	3	General Membership Meeting	
June	7	Kids Fishing Outing at Kensington Park	J Somers/M Apostolopoulos
June	14	Sterling SP Walleye Tournament	Fabian Sepulveda
June	21	Lake Erie Walleye Tournament	Bob Schulz
June	22	Lake Erie Walleye Tournament	Fabian Sepulveda
July	8	Club Summer Picnic	Mark Platt/Dave Zawacki
July	8	Manistee River Cleanup Day @ High Bridge	Roger Hinchcliff
July	24	Ludington Salmon Tournament – Thu	Gale Frazee / Tom Abdelnour
July	26	Ludington Member Memorial Tournament – Sat	Dave & Kim Zawacki
July	27	Ludington Salmon Tournament – Sun	TBD
August	2	Erieau Tournament – Sat. Erieau, Canada	Henry Nabors / Ron Belemore
August	3	Erieau Tournament – Sun. Erieau, Canada	Ron Belemore / Henry Nabors
August	6	General Membership Meeting	
August	9	Salmon Tournament – Manistee – Sat	Mike Hartrick
August	10	Salmon Tournament – Manistee – Sun	Marc / Kirk Traver
August	16	Lake Tournament – Frankfort	Robert Grech / B Dodge
August	17	Salmon Tournament – Frankfort	Bill Dodge / R Grech
August	23	PM Lake Kayak/Small Boat	Eric Braden
September	2	General Membership Meeting	
September	6	Manistee Kayak/SB & Pier Tournaments	Eric Braden
September	27	Manistee River Tournaments	Fabian Sepulveda
September	28	Muskegon Lake Salmon Camp out Kayak/SB	Keith Childs
October	7	General Membership Meeting	
October	11	Lake Erie Perch Outing	Dave Zawacki
October	15	Captain/Crew/River Angler 2023 Calendar Mtg	Kelley/Trenz/Nabors/Henderson
October	18	Ludington Pier/Beach Event	Eric Braden
November	1	Manistee River/Pier/Shore Tournaments w DS	Zawacki/Trenz
November	11	General Membership Meeting 2nd Tue. Election Day Room at Senior Center Nov 4	
November	29	Ohio Walleye Tournament	Dave Zawacki
December	2	CHRISTMAS PARTY - HAPPY HOLIDAYS	
December	6	PM & other NW Mi Rivers Tournament	Marc Traver/Adam Trenz
December	13	Huron River Tournament	Roger Hinchcliff

2025 South Haven Steelheader's Calendar of Events

Month	Date	Event
Note: SH Steelheaders (SHS) Chapter Events in BOLD * = Not Confirmed		
February	15	Russ Pomeroy Memorial Ice Fishing Tourney – Date/Location based on ice conditions
February	15-16	Michigan Free Fishing Weekend
March		South Haven Steelheaders Spring Kick Off Party
March	13-16	Ultimate Sport Show – DeVos Place, Grand Rapids
March	20	Fishing Seminar – Speaker TBD - South Haven American Legion Post 49*
April	17	Lake Michigan Fisheries Workshop – South Haven American Legion Post 49 *
May	3-4	Horizon Bank Quake Coho Classic - Michigan City, IN
May	9-10	St. Joe Tourney/SW Chapter
May	16	South Haven Pro Am Tournament Captains Registration
May	17-18	South Haven Pro Am Tournament – South Side City Marina
May	24	Merle Morris Tournament – River Bend Boat Club
June	7	South Haven Steelheaders' Harbor Light Brewery Ladies Tournament
June	7-8	Free Fishing Weekend
June	13-15	South Haven Harborfest
August	9	SHS Fish Boil (Blueberry Festival - August 7th-10th)
August	16	SHS Operation Injured Soldier/SH Salute to Veterans
August	30	Labor Day Weekend
November	29	South Haven Steelheaders River Tournament

2024 South Haven Steelheaders Membership & Board Meeting Dates

Note: All Board and membership meetings are generally held the third Thursday of each month except for special circumstances such as Pro Am Captain's Meeting set up in May, Fish Boil organizational meeting in August and prior to Deer Season in November.

Meeting Location: South Haven American Legion Post 49, 129 Michigan Avenue, South Haven, MI 49090
Board Meetings start at 5:45pm and membership meetings at 7:00pm.
For more information email: president@southhavensteelheaders.com

NO JANUARY MEMBERSHIP MEETING

FEB 20th – 3rd Thursday, Guest speaker – TBD

MAR 20th – 3rd Thursday (week after GR Ultimate Sports Show, 3/13-3/16) – Fishing Seminar

APRIL 17th – 3rd Thursday – Southern Lake Michigan Fisheries Workshop – Dr. Dan O'Keefe presenting

MAY 15th – 3rd Thursday *prior to SHS Pro/Am – Membership meeting.

JUNE 19th - 3rd Thursday

JULY 17th - 3rd Thursday

AUG 7th – 1st Thursday – *Prior to the Annual Fish Boil

SEP 18th - 3rd Thursday – Regular & Board meeting to prioritize & set next year's events. ID event chairs.

OCT 16th - 3rd Thursday –Regular and Board meeting to finalize next year's events and set calendar

NOV 6th – 1st Thursday – Regular and Board Meeting to finalize budget and calendar

December 18th – 3rd Thursday – Regular Meeting, Election of Directors

The 2025 Pro Am Tournament Committee Kick-off meeting is the 2nd Monday of November (11/10/25)

2025 Southwest MI Steelheader's Calendar of Events

Month	Date	Event	Information
Membership meetings and board meeting are held the second Thursday of each month but please confirm online for the most updated information. www.swmsteelheaders.com www.facebook.com/southwestmichigansteelheaders			
January	9	Annual Party, Club Elections & 2024 Big Fish Awards	
March	1	Tackle Palooza (Stevensville, Legion)	
May	8-10	Schu's Summer Challenge Tournament (Tournament Trail Event)	
June	12	Club Meeting – Summer Run Steelhead & Offshore Fishing the Thermocline	
June	20-21	Trolling with the Troops Fishing Event	
September	11	Club Meeting – Fall Run Salmon and Steelhead	
December	6	Winter Challenge River Fishing Tournament	
Meeting Location: Elks Lodge, 601 Riverview Drive, Benton Harbor MI 49022 Southwest Michigan Steelheaders swmsteelheaders.com			

2025 Thumb Chapter Steelheader's Calendar of Events

Month	Date	Time	Event	Location / Information
April	17	7:30 pm	Regular Meeting	Harbor Beach American Legion
May	3	6:00 am	Can2Can Fishing Tournament	Need Workers! Harbor Beach Marina
June	7	6:00 am	Veterans Fishing Outing	Contact Kevin Ramsey for details. Harbor Beach Marina
June	19	7:30 pm	Regular Meeting	Harbor Beach American Legion
August	21	7:30 pm	Regular Meeting	Harbor Beach American Legion
October	16	7:30 pm	Regular Meeting Election of Board/Officers	Harbor Beach American Legion
Contact Paul Neikoski at 810-300-1561 for inquiries.				

2025 Thunderbay Steelheader's Calendar of Events

Month	Date	Time	Information
January	6	7:00 pm	Monthly Meeting
January	25	6:30 am	Ice Fishing Derby on Lake Avalon
February	3	7:00 pm	Monthly Meeting
March	8	4:00 pm	Annual Meeting / Dinner
April	7	7:00 pm	Monthly Meeting
May	17	5:30 am	Presque Isle tournament
June	14	5:30 am	Presque Isle tournament
June	28	5:30 am	Presque Isle tournament
June	29	5:30 am	Presque Isle tournament
July	7	7:00pm	Monthly Meeting
August	23		Rogers City Tournament
September	1	7:00pm	Monthly Meeting
October	6	7:00pm	Monthly Meeting
December	1	7:00pm	Monthly Meeting

2025 White River Steelheader's Calendar of Events

Month	Date	Time	Event information
Note: All meetings will be held at 6:30 pm at the VFW, any changes in location will be decided a couple of days before the meeting. – Any questions or to verify dates/times please call Clint Pollock at (231) 893-0210 or Terry Clark at (231) 893-6805.			
January	9	6:30pm	Meeting at the VFW
February	6	6:30pm	Meeting at the VFW
March	6	6:30pm	Meeting at the VFW
April	3	6:30pm	Meeting at the VFW
May	1	6:30pm	Meeting at the VFW
June	5	6:30pm	Meeting at the VFW
July		6:30pm	Meeting at the VFW
August	7	6:30pm	Meeting at the VFW
September	4	6:30pm	Meeting at the VFW
October	2	6:30pm	Meeting at the VFW
November	6	6:30pm	Meeting at the VFW
December	4	6:30pm	Meeting at the VFW

MSSFA Board of Directors Meetings 2025

Wednesday February 19
Via TEAMS - 6:00pm

Saturday April 16
at the Michigan Historical Library and Museum - 10:00am

Wednesday June 18
Via TEAMS - 6:00pm

Wednesday August 20
Via TEAMS - 6:00pm

Wednesday October 15
Via TEAMS - 6:00pm

Wednesday December 17
Via TEAMS - 6:00pm



Illustration from pngtree.com

Join a Chapter, Join the Fun!

**For more information,
contact your Chapter Membership Director
or mssfamembership@charter.net**



Lake Erie - Nancy Nabors landing a steelhead and Henry Nabors with Lake Erie Walleye



Henry Nabors and Mike Hartrick - Frankfort

An Invitation to the Metro-West Steelheaders

The Metro-West Steelheaders (MWS) is a 160plus 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. The MWS is one of eleven Michigan Steelhead & Salmon Fishermen's Association (MSSFA) chapters across the state.

MWS has something for everyone's interest with fishing events, socializing, environmental education, community outreach, and fund raising. MWS holds roughly sixty (60) events per year ranging from community outreach at the Ultimate Fishing Show and Outdoorama Show, fishing on Lakes Erie, Huron and Michigan for walleye, salmon and trout. There is a river group that will fish river systems in Michigan as well as "Steelhead alley" in Ohio. A kayak & small boat group holds numerous events in Lake Michigan ports and multiple inland lakes. Lastly, there is a pier-beach group that will fish several ports

annually. MWS also holds their annual Swap Meet in April. There are three social events (Summer Picnic, Kids Fish & Christmas Party) and two fund raisers (Comedy for a Cause & Annual Sportsman's Banquet).

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 three annual river clean ups on the Clinton and Manistee Rivers

MWS sponsors an annual "Kids Fish" at Kensington Metro-Park with over 200 kids and related guardians annually. Each child receives a new pre-rigged fishing rod, bait and instruction by MWS volunteers throughout the morning. MWS also supports six (6) Salmon In the Classroom projects by providing equipment for the

schools.

MWS holds (10) General membership meetings per year. These meetings are open to the public with expert speakers related to fishing topics as well as MDNR officials and biologists. When able to meet in person each meeting promotes social interaction and the exchange of information through time set aside for social interaction and networking. There are also 50/50 and tackle raffles, event updates and fishing reports.

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

MWS Fundraisers annually 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 and donations to fisheries relat-

"Invitation"
Continued on page 23





Above and Right: Kenny Family at Ludington



Below: Kenny Nguyen on the river



Above: Clyde Schoen MWS Event Erieau Canada



Above: Tran Simon, Bear Creek



Above, Below and Right: Kids Outing at Kensington



Above: Jackson Phil and Toledo Beach Walleye



Below: Fred Derksen on Kayak Fishing event



**“Invitation”
Continued from page 22**

ed special programs like the “Clinton River Watershed Council” and the Lake Superior State University Atlantic Salmon project. MWS is always looking for new members welcome anyone interested in fishing or learning more about sportfishing. Please feel free to come join us at one of the general meetings on the first Tuesday of each month at 7:00 P.M. Meet-

ings 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 or contact Henry Nabors-Membership at hnnabors@gmail.com (258.225.4964)

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