



State of Wisconsin \ DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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GREAT LAKES FISHERIES NEWS – JULY 2008.

If you have questions or comments about issues related to Great Lakes fisheries, contact Bill Horns by phone (608-266-8782), FAX (608-266-2244), or e-mail (william.horns@wisconsin.gov). We also maintain Lake Michigan and Lake Superior web pages:

Lake Michigan - <http://dnr.wi.gov/fish/lakemich/>

Lake Superior - <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/gmu/superior/fish/fish.html>

You are invited to review a lake trout stocking proposal.

The Lake Michigan Fisheries Forum will hold a public review of a proposed new lake-wide lake trout rehabilitation strategy. Under this strategy, future stocking in Wisconsin would be focused on the mid-lake refuge, with most other stocking concentrated in or near the northern refuge. Those two areas are outlined on the map. Stocking in near shore Wisconsin waters will be reduced. The lake trout are produced by the US Fish and Wildlife Service and stocked according to policies established by the four states (Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan) and the tribes (Chippewa Ottawa Resource Agency).

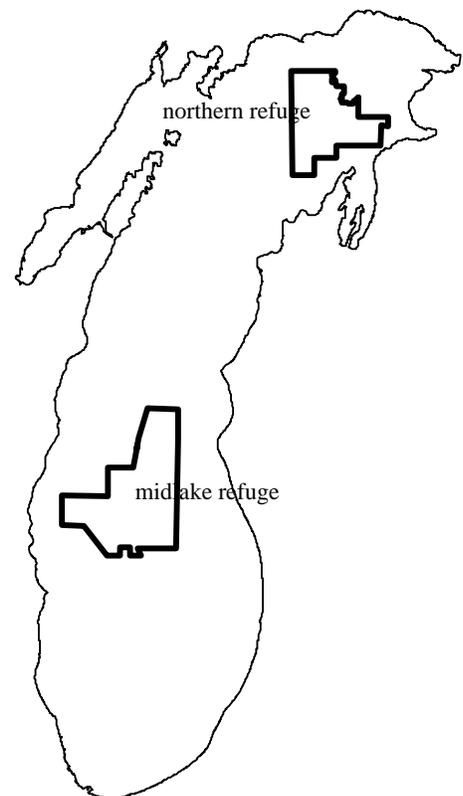
The Forum will meet at 6 pm, Monday, August 11, in the Lakeshore Room of the Lake Shore Technical College in Cleveland Wisconsin. Take I43 to Exit 137 (County XX) and go east to the college.

Proposed statewide invasive species rules go to hearings in August

The Department will hold public hearings in August on a package of rules dealing with invasive species – everything from rock snot to snakeheads. For fish, the rule would implement the “white list” approach, which means that only species appearing on a permitted (“white”) list could be imported for any use in Wisconsin. The rule does NOT address the ballast problem, but should help minimize the risk of future introductions of invasive species through the aquarium trade, fish farms, and live bait. More information is available at <http://dnr.wi.gov/invasives/classification/>, or contact Bill Horns.

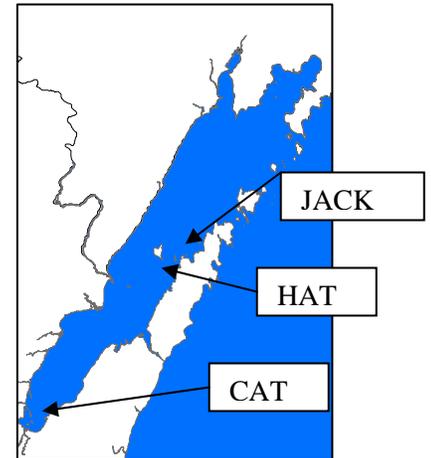
Northern pike regulations will remain unchanged on Lake Superior

After a thorough review and consultation with the public, the Department has decided to maintain current northern pike sport fishing regulations on Lake Superior. Under those regulations, the minimum size for northerns is 26 inches. A group of anglers, believing that northern pike were being overharvested, had developed a proposal to establish a “protected slot” limit in which fish between 25 and 40 inches could not be harvested. After reviewing the available data, discussing the issue with sports clubs, and a taking comments at a public meeting, Department biologists recommend making no changes to the rules. Our surveys indicate a healthy but low-density northern pike population with fair numbers of fish over 26 inches and some as large as 46 inches, something you would not see in an over-harvested population.



We have completed the third year of cormorant control on Green Bay

Our goal is to reduce the number of cormorant nests in Green Bay and northern Door County by 50%. The year 2008 was the third year of the control program, in which we contract with Wildlife Services, a division of the US Department of Agriculture, to oil the eggs of cormorants on Cat, Hat, and Jack Islands. Oiling suffocates the eggs, but the parents continue to tend the nests and do not replace the eggs. This work is conducted under the authority of a Public Resources Depredation Order issued by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Cormorant abundance is estimated by counting nests, which is done across the Great Lakes at five-year intervals. We do not expect a rapid decline in cormorant abundance, but our program should in time result in substantial reductions in the number of adult and juvenile birds in the area.



VHS and Wild Rose hatchery construction are affecting salmon and trout stocking.

Salmon and trout stocking in Lake Michigan has been affected temporarily by two things: 1) renovation of Wild Rose State Fish Hatchery and 2) new VHS-prevention policies limiting movement of fish eggs and fish into and between hatcheries. In order to minimize the chances of spreading VHS or infecting our hatcheries, we will not move eggs or fish into any hatchery unless they have been disinfected or shown to be free of VHS and we will not move eggs or fish from Lake Michigan or its tributaries into any hatchery that is not within the Lake Michigan drainage basin. As a result of the disruption at Wild Rose SFH and the VHS policies, most of our cohos produced for the 2007-08 stocking year were stocked out as fall fingerlings in 2007 rather than as yearlings in 2008, chinook stocking in the spring of 2008 was reduced from our baseline of 1,144,000 to 724,000, and no Skamania steelhead were taken for stocking in 2009. With the new cold-water side of Wild Rose SFH coming on line this summer and with appropriate adjustments in production planning to adapt to the VHS policies, we expect to return to full production levels. However, it is not clear when we will be able to resume production of Skamania. Skamania pose a special problem because they must be transferred into a holding facility in the fall as adults and held until they are capable of spawning. Because we do not have a reliable method for disinfecting adult fish we cannot resume this practice until we develop a suitable holding facility outside of any hatchery. Until Skamania propagation is resumed, we will attempt to replace them in equal numbers with Ganaraska or Chambers Creek steelhead.

We can send you our latest Lake Michigan Management Reports

We have completed the annual Lake Michigan Management Reports. It can be found on line at the Lake Michigan web page, or contact Bill Horns and he will send you a copy.

Michigan coho stocking will be reduced again in 2009

The Michigan DNR continues to struggle with coho production and does not expect to be back at full production until 2010. Their annual goal is to stock 1.6 million yearlings. They fell short in 2006 (1,475,000 yearlings), 2007 (932,000 yearlings, with special help from Indiana), and 2008 (1,215,000 yearlings with special help from WDNR and clubs in Illinois and Wisconsin). Their inventory for stocking in 2009 is down to 670,000. These production shortfalls reflect budget limitations and, in 2009, hatchery production problems. Production in 2010 is expected to return to 1.6 million yearlings.

No increases are planned for yellow perch harvest limits in Green Bay or Lake Michigan

Although we have enjoyed several years of strong natural reproduction by yellow perch in Green Bay, our indices of the abundance of adult fish do not at this time justify increasing either the daily sport bag limit (now 15 fish) or the annual commercial harvest limit (now 100,000 pounds) at this time. Meanwhile, the yellow perch population in Lake Michigan has stabilized a low level of abundance. We have seen occasionally years of strong natural reproduction, but not the kind of sustained reproduction that would justify increasing the sport or reopening a commercial harvest. For several years the five-fish daily bag limit in Lake Michigan was sustained by a strong

1998 year class. More recently, 2005 was a banner year for natural reproduction, and we should begin to see those fish dominate the catch.