

## State of Wisconsin \ DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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TO: People interested in Great Lakes fisheries  
FROM: Bill Horns, Great Lakes Fisheries Specialist

This is an update on some of the issues facing us on the Great Lakes. If you have questions or comments about the topics discussed here or any other issues related to Great Lakes fisheries, contact me by phone (608-266-8782), FAX (608-266-2244), or e-mail ([william.horns@wisconsin.gov](mailto:william.horns@wisconsin.gov)). We also maintain Lake Michigan and Lake Superior web pages:

Lake Michigan - <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/water/fhp/fish/lakemich/index.htm>

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

**E-mail list.** If you would like to be on an e-mail list to receive information in the future, send me an e-mail with "mailing list" on the subject line. Address it to [william.horns@wisconsin.gov](mailto:william.horns@wisconsin.gov).

**Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia (VHS) has been found in the Great Lakes.** In 2005 VHS was confirmed in the Great Lakes for the first time. It has not yet been documented in Lake Michigan, but has been found in the St Lawrence River (in round goby, burbot, and muskellunge), in Lake Ontario (in freshwater drum, muskellunge, round goby, and smallmouth bass), in Lake Erie (in freshwater drum, white bass, and yellow perch), and in Lake St. Clair (in musky, smallmouth bass, black crappie, bluegill, gizzard shad, redhorse sucker, bluntnose sucker, northern pike, and freshwater drum). To guard against the spread of VHS the US Department of Agriculture has issued an emergency order prohibiting the movement of live fish belonging to any of 37 listed species out of any Great Lakes state. There is **no human health threat from VHS**, but it is a serious threat to fish populations. Some fish that die from VHS show no external signs. Others show signs that include bulging eyes, bloated abdomens, inactive or overactive behavior, and hemorrhaging. As a precaution against transmission of VHS into state hatcheries, eggs from all trout and salmon that we collect at our weirs are disinfected and the facilities at the spawning weirs are disinfected every day fish are processed. Adult chinook, coho and seeforellen brown trout are being tested for the virus and other pathogens during the spawning run this fall. We will consider other precautionary steps to reduce the risk of moving VHS from the Great Lakes to inland waters. The Department contact on this issue is Erin Celello ([erin.celello@wisconsin.gov](mailto:erin.celello@wisconsin.gov)).



Fingerling sturgeon in streamside rearing facility

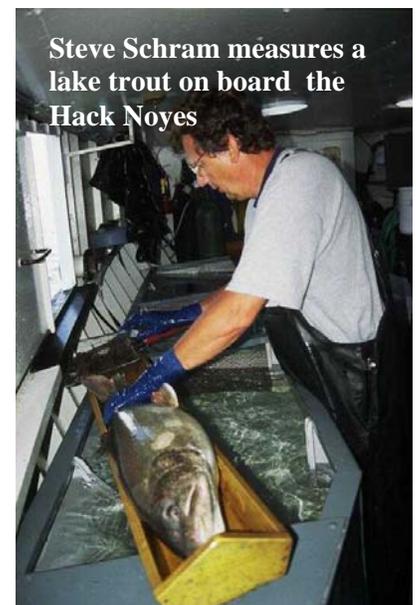
**Lake sturgeon restoration in the Milwaukee River.** Starting in 2006, the Department (with additional funding provided through the Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act and the Great Lakes Fishery Trust) raised sturgeon in a streamside rearing facility (SRF) on the Milwaukee River at Riveredge Nature Center in Newburg. Sturgeon are raised there using Milwaukee River water to maximize the probability that they will imprint to that river and return there to spawn 15 or so years

from now when they reach sexual maturity. The SRF is a state of the art, mobile trailer that holds four raceways, egg incubating trays, sediment filters, treatment baths, and a wet lab. Eggs were obtained from Wolf River lake sturgeon in April and transferred to the facility. Riveredge staff and volunteers were largely responsible for the daily operation of the facility. In 2006 were able to raise 27 lake sturgeon and release them in October as large fingerlings. The project is under the direction of our Southeast Lake Michigan supervisory, Brad Eggold. A similar project is planned for the Manitowoc River.

**Tournament rule proposal.** In 2004 the Wisconsin State Legislature adopted a statute (2003 Wisconsin Act 249) that required the Department to promulgate rules to establish a program to authorize and regulate fishing tournaments, including those on the Great Lakes. A proposed rule has been developed and is now being taken to public hearings. For information about the proposed rule go to <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/water/fhp/fish/fishingtournaments/fishtournruledev.htm> or contact Patrick Schmalz at [patrick.shmalz@wisconsin.gov](mailto:patrick.shmalz@wisconsin.gov) or 608-266-8170. Seven public hearings are being held on the proposed rules. The closest hearings to the Great Lakes are on November 8 in Green Bay (Bay Beach Wildlife Sanctuary Nature Center, 1660 East Shore Drive), on November 9 in Sturtevant (DNR Service Center, 9531 Rayne Road), and on November 14 in Spooner (Agricultural Research Station, W6646 Highway 70). All hearings start at 7 pm. Written comments are given the same weight as comments given at public hearings. They may be submitted to Patrick Schmalz (Bureau of Fisheries Management, P.O. Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707) until November 17.

**35 year survey tracks changes in Apostle Islands region.** Since 1970 a graded-mesh gill net survey has been conducted annually in the waters of the Apostle Islands. Recently, Department biologists Steve Schram and Mike Seider reported a decline in burbot in the area, and attributed the change to increasing numbers of lean and fat lake trout. The lake trout may affect burbot directly through predation or indirectly through competition for food. Although the commercial harvest of whitefish is at historic highs, their abundance continues to increase. The summer survey reveals an overall shift in the fish community away from the non-native smelt and stocked salmonines and toward native species including lake trout, lake herring, and whitefish. For more information about the study, contact Steve Schram ([steven.schram@wisconsin.gov](mailto:steven.schram@wisconsin.gov), 715-779-4035 ex 12).

**Commercial chub fishing rule.** Commercial gill netting for bloater chubs (*Coregonus hoyi*) is allowed in two large areas of Lake Michigan known as the northern and southern chub fishing zones. One of the concerns related to that fishery is the incidental kill of lake trout. For many years a “60-fathom rule” was in effect, requiring the nets to be deeper than 60 fathoms (300 feet) during the winter (January 16 through the end of February) in the southern chub fishing zone and deeper than 55 fathoms during the winter in the northern chub fishing zone. Those restrictions were controversial; commercial fishers sought shallower depth limits to give them access to safer, more productive, and more convenient fishing areas during the winter, but sport fishers argued that any changes to the depth limits would increase the incidental kill of lake trout. In 2002 temporary changes were implemented that, we think, have addressed all concerns. Nets were allowed in shallower water during the winter period, but new minimum depths were established for the spring months (March 1 through April 25). Under the temporary rules the minimum depth has been 45 fathoms in both zones from January 16 through April 25. We believe that under this rule any added lake trout mortality during January and February has been more than offset by reduced mortality during March and April. With the temporary rule scheduled to expire at the end of June 2007, we are proposing to extend it indefinitely. **A public hearing will be held at the Manitowoc Room, Lakeshore Technical College, 1290 North Avenue, Cleveland, WI. at 4 pm on Monday November 13.**



Steve Schram measures a lake trout on board the Hack Noyes