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Contact: Tim Cwalinski, 989-732-3541 or Ed Golder, 517-284-5815

DNR announces 2015 Black Lake sturgeon season harvest results



Department of Natural Resources officials announced the 2015 Black Lake sturgeon harvest season ended after more than five hours on Saturday, February 7 with five fish being harvested. The fishing season, which included spearing or hook-and-line fishing, was scheduled to run Feb. 7 - 11, or until the harvest quota had been reached.

“The 2015 allocation of Black Lake sturgeon for the State of Michigan was six fish, although DNR officials imposed a voluntary quota of five fish for recreational anglers”, said Todd Grischke, Lake Huron Basin Coordinator. “Establishing this one-fish buffer for the fishing season allowed us to maintain a buffer against potential overharvest.”

There were 303 registered anglers on the ice on Saturday, up from 228 the year before. Most anglers registered at the pre-registration held on Feb. 6, which

allows for a much more streamlined process. Anglers of all ages and genders participated, including a good number of supervised youth.



According to Tim Cwalinski, DNR fisheries biologist, anglers were reporting much movement of lake sturgeon the weeks prior to the 2015 fishing season. This included anglers seeing good numbers of smaller sturgeon, likely those stocked from the streamside hatchery in the last ten years. Despite this, fish movement during opening morning of fishing season was less than anticipated.



The first sturgeon was harvested around 9 a.m. It was a 67 inch female that weighed 75 pounds. Fish number two was taken at 9:33 a.m. and was a 58 inch male weighing 45 pounds. Fish three was a 69 inch female that weighed 80 pounds, taken at 12:35 p.m.

Fish four was the day's largest, a 71 inch female that weighed in at 87 pounds and was taken at 12:50 p.m. The fifth and final fish was harvested at 1:27 p.m. and was a 50 inch female that weighed 31 pounds.

Four of the five fish taken had been captured several times before by Michigan State University and DNR sturgeon researchers during spring spawning runs.



The sturgeon fishing hotline was updated at 1:27 p.m. which officially closed the season. In addition, signal cannons and sirens were used to signal the season's end. DNR law enforcement officials and other DNR personnel, were embedded in the fishing communities and were able to quickly report harvested fish this year, as well as to quickly contact all lake sturgeon anglers on the ice and close the season.

The 2015 sturgeon fishing season on Black Lake was a success, from the angler participation, the Sturgeon Shivaree event, to the harvest, said Brenda Archambo, president of the Black Lake Chapter of Sturgeon For Tomorrow. This entire weekend shows the link that lake sturgeon have to this area, not only biologically, but socially and culturally. We look forward to upcoming years working collaboratively in planning and facilitating future events, said Archambo.

The unlimited entry fishery paired with a significant on-ice presence of DNR personnel allows for greater participation by anglers while protecting the population of lake sturgeon in Black Lake from overharvest. It was deemed a very successful season for angler participation, fish harvest, quick response times, and from a safety perspective. Rehabilitation of lake sturgeon in the Cheboygan River watershed is a cooperative effort involving the Department of Natural Resources, the Black Lake Chapter of Sturgeon For Tomorrow, Michigan State University and Tower-Kleber Limited Partnership.