

In 2015, the “modern” version of our Statewide Angler Survey Program (SASP) celebrated its 30-year anniversary collecting creel survey data during winter and open-water fishing seasons. These extensive creel surveys took place across the Great Lakes coastline for Lakes Erie, Huron, Michigan and Superior. In addition, a joint US-Canadian international creel took place on the Detroit River and many more inland surveys were conducted in rivers and lakes statewide. We estimate SASP staff interacted with more than 78,000 people and sampled more 9,000 fish in 2015.

## Non-Game Sampling

In 2015, the DNR was able to remove 20 species of fish from the Species of Greatest Conservation Need List. This action resulted from an increased effort by the department towards sampling and identifying non-game species. Comprehensive surveys and identification training have provided the DNR with a better picture of the condition of Michigan’s fisheries resources and revealed that many species were in better shape than previously thought.



## Fish Health

Fisheries Division monitors wild fish populations for pathogens that could cause disease in wild or hatchery fish. This is done in partnership with the Michigan State University Aquatic Animal Health Laboratory. In 2015, approximately 1,200 fish were collected and tested. These included coldwater (salmon and steelhead) and coolwater (walleye and muskellunge) broodstock species used for hatchery production, wild fish collected in the vicinity of source waters for several hatcheries, fish transferred between lakes to meet fisheries management objectives, and fish reported dying or diseased. For all fish examined and tested, there were no new or significant pathogens found.

## Aquatic Invasive Species

In August of 2015, DNR staff assisted the Illinois DNR with a fish removal effort on the leading edge of the invasive carp expansion on the Illinois River. In addition to increased training for Fisheries Division staff, those from Michigan assisted in removing 100,000 pounds of these detrimental fish in reaches of the Illinois River just south of the Chicago Area Waterway System where they pose the greatest risk of introduction to the Great Lakes. This collaborative work is critical for protecting our Great Lakes from future invasions.

Efficient division operations

# Goal 5

## Lean Process Improvement

Fisheries Division engaged in two Lean Process Improvement projects during 2015. The Master Angler program completed its first implementation plan, resulting in a streamlined process for applications with angler-friendly online submission options and a significant increase in program participation. The first improvement cycle and implementation plans for the Wholesale, Commercial and Charter Reporting Systems were also started. Improving existing processes from the ground up with changes suggested by those who do the work has increased the efficiency of these programs and strengthened staff work relationships.



### FY2015 Funding Sources

Game & Fish Protection Fund	\$19,279,400
Game & Fish Settlement	\$945,100
Federal, Dingell-Johnson	\$8,769,628
Federal, Other	\$17,730
Private	\$590,345
Invasive Species Fund	\$30,300
General Fund / General Purpose	\$1,405,300

### FY2015 Appropriations

Aquatic Mitigation	\$975,400
Fish Production	\$9,209,265
Field Management, Research & Assessment, Resource Support, Creel, Administrative	\$18,963,559

**Total FY2015 Budget: \$31 million**

- [youtube.com/MichiganDNR](https://www.youtube.com/MichiganDNR)
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Fiscal Year October 1, 2014 - September 30, 2015  
[Michigan.gov/fishing](http://Michigan.gov/fishing)



# 2015 FISHERIES DIVISION Annual Report

**FISHERIES DIVISION MISSION:** *To protect and enhance Michigan’s aquatic life and habitats for the benefit of current and future generations.*

**FISHERIES DIVISION VISION:** *To provide world-class freshwater fishing opportunities, supported by healthy aquatic environments, which enhance the quality of life in Michigan.*

In the world of freshwater fishing, Michigan stands head and shoulders above the rest. With 3,000 miles of Great Lakes shoreline, more than 11,000 inland lakes, and tens of thousands of miles of rivers and streams, you're never very far from an angling opportunity. Michigan fishing is truly world class.

Let us show you the numerous ways the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Fisheries Division worked diligently to maintain our fisheries for current and future generations - specifically with highlights chosen to illustrate a few of the Fiscal Year 2015 accomplishments. The following is our Annual Report, with the content reflective of the work laid out in our five-year strategic plan (*Charting the Course: Fisheries Division's Framework for Managing Aquatic Resources*) that details how we will continue managing fish and aquatic communities, habitat, anglers and the division itself.



Before



After

The original Thompson State Fish Hatchery needed dams on both Thompson and William's creeks to provide that facility with water.

Upon moving the hatchery to its current location in 1978, these dams were no longer necessary. In the summer of 2015, the dams were removed and a new channel was constructed to improve aquatic habitat in both Thompson and William's creeks. Removing the dams allowed for aquatic organism passage via restored connectivity from Lake Michigan to the headwaters (approximately 7 miles), and facilitated cooler water temperatures and higher oxygen levels on the lower section of this stream. This project was funded by DNR's Aquatic Habitat Management Grant Program and received support from Fisheries and Parks and Recreation divisions, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, and Schoolcraft County Sport Fishing Association.

## Thompson Dam Removal

Healthy aquatic ecosystems & sustainable fish populations

# Goal 1

Want even more detail on our work in Fiscal Year 2015? Read a full report at [michigan.gov/fishing](http://michigan.gov/fishing).

## Habitat Work

The DNR established the Habitat Management Unit (HMU) within Fisheries Division to protect, manage and improve aquatic habitat in Michigan. This unit's role constantly evolves with advances in science and lessons learned from past and on-going projects, with attention to the ever-increasing interest in improving the state's fisheries. At the end of the day, HMU's goal is to protect stream or lake function and stability through all aspects of their work, continuing to keep Michigan's fisheries and waters world class.



Black Buffalo

## State Record Fish

Around nearly every corner of Michigan there are phenomenal fishing opportunities, with many locations producing state record catches that leave a few lucky anglers with bragging rights to last a lifetime. In Fiscal Year 2015 five anglers joined the elite group of Michigan state record fish holders – including Mark Leep of Middleville (Freshwater Drum, Gun Lake), Sage Colegrove of Muskegon (Black Buffalo, Grand River), Cindy Lou Cordo of North Muskegon (White Perch, Bear Lake), Garrett Reid of Nashville (Quillback Carpsucker, Hardy Dam Pond), and Blake Wilson of Lake Ann (Quillback Carpsucker, Hardy Dam Pond). You read that correctly – the record for Quillback Carpsucker was broken twice in Fiscal Year 2015 and on the same waterbody.

## Saginaw Bay Regulation Changes

Working with the public, Fisheries Division implemented several management actions aimed at improving walleye and yellow perch fisheries in Saginaw Bay. These included: 1) liberalizing recreational walleye regulations; 2) implementing cormorant management; 3) lowering the daily bag limit on yellow perch; 4) reducing commercial harvest and effort on Saginaw Bay yellow perch; and 5) cooperating with U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and other agencies on a proposal to reintroduce cisco (lake herring) into Saginaw Bay. It is anticipated that collectively, these management actions will help increase yellow perch survival and improve both walleye and yellow perch populations in Saginaw Bay.



**Fish Stocking**  
25 million fish stocked at nearly 1,150 locations!

Michigan's world-class fisheries benefited in a big way from the division's fish production efforts in 2015. Nearly 336 tons of fish were stocked, providing a broad range of angling opportunities. Of particular note, Great Lakes strain muskellunge were stocked at several sites across the state, including a handful of lakes that will serve as brood stock lakes in the future.

# Goal 2

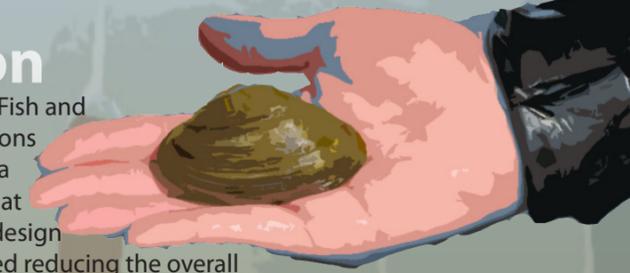
Diverse fishing opportunities

## Hunt Creek Partnership

The DNR entered into a partnership with Lake Superior State University, opening a new chapter in the life of the Hunt Creek Fisheries Research Station. Established in 1939, the nearly 3,000 acre site in the northern Lower Peninsula has provided scientific information related to trout and stream habitat management used by fisheries managers throughout the nation to this day. In cooperation with the DNR, Lake Superior State University will operate the site as a teaching and research facility for students interested in natural resources management and research.

## Snuffbox Mussel Relocation

The DNR partnered with Central Michigan University (CMU), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Ionia Conservation District to remove the Lyons Dam, restoring unique, high gradient habitat in the Grand River (Ionia County). The presence of the Federally endangered Snuffbox mussel at the project site required the team to evaluate several dam removal design options to avoid harm to the species. Conservation measures included reducing the overall footprint of the project which will ultimately result in a more complete dam removal and improved channel restoration. To further protect the Snuffbox mussel and other state listed species, DNR divers aided CMU in a mussel relocation effort. As a result of these diving operations 1,273 individual mussels were safely relocated to a refuge area.



Strategic resource partnerships

# Goal 3

## Platte River Effluent Issue

After nearly 30 years, 2015 marked the completion of 60 consecutive months of compliance with all effluent limitations at Platte River State Fish Hatchery, associated with a settlement agreement between the DNR and the Platte Lake Improvement Association (PLIA). What had been an adversarial relationship with the PLIA was transformed into a very successful partnership. As a result of this team effort, the Platte River State Fish Hatchery has set the world-wide standard for effluent management for large-scale fish production facilities.

## School Outreach

In 2015 the department's *Salmon in the Classroom* program expanded and is now in 251 classrooms statewide teaching students about salmon life cycles and the importance of aquatic resources. There were 315 classroom tours of our weirs and hatcheries engaging 9,087 students who discovered how fish are reared and then stocked in Michigan's waters. While learning in these hands-on educational environments, one student commented, "Taking care of my dog is a lot easier than raising fish!" He is correct -- and the effect of these aquatic education programs will stay with these students well into their adult years.

