STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
LANSING

RICK SNYDER
GOVERNOR

KEITH CREAGH
DIRECTOR

SUBMITTED: August 10, 2012

MEMORANDUM TO THE DIRECTOR

Information: Natural Resources Commission

Subject: Special Fishing Regulations, Big Island Lakes Complex, Schoolcraft County (FO-201)
FOR INFORMATION ONLY

Authority

The Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451, as amended, authorizes the Director to provide for better protection and preservation of fish, game and birds.

Discussion and Background

This Order has preserved quality fishing in waters of the Big Island Lakes Complex in Schoolcraft County for many years. This area is a popular destination for outdoor enthusiasts and recreationists who travel to the Big Island Lake Wilderness in the Hiawatha National Forest located centrally in the Upper Peninsula. The wilderness contains waters connected by maintained portage trails plus other remotely accessible waters for those who prefer a greater challenge. An important draw to this Complex is the solitude and peace and quiet that can be found in the wilderness since there is a prohibition on mechanized equipment (including radios, bikes, portage wheels, motors, carts, trailers, ATVs or other wheeled devices). We are proposing one regulation change for this Order pertaining to the new statewide possession limit on muskellunge (including tiger muskellunge) from one (1) per day to one (1) muskellunge per season.

Over the past year, Fisheries Division has been working with the Warmwater Resources Steering Committee, a public advisory group, to discuss various regulations and to specifically review muskellunge regulation proposals. As a result, several regulation options were developed. From March 26 through May 25, 2012, the public was given an opportunity to comment on the proposed regulations and a muskellunge possession limit of one fish per angler per year was the most supported option. Law enforcement personnel have been involved in the process and are supportive of this recommendation. We are now implementing the change statewide and this Order is part of a suite of Orders which governs muskellunge.

A new Muskellunge Harvest Tag will be available for the next fishing season as a means to enforce the new possession limit. All anglers who would like to harvest a muskellunge will need to attain a nontransferable Muskellunge Harvest Tag (at no cost) available at all license vendors. Anglers who do not possess the tag are required to release all muskellunge that they catch. The new Muskellunge Harvest Tag will allow the department to keep track of how many tags are provided to anglers and help us monitor the level of potential harvest that occurs annually. The new information will benefit future management of the species.

Recommendation

It is our recommendation that the change proposed to Fisheries Order 201 as indicated above be approved to take effect on April 1, 2013. The recommended change will continue to preserve and protect quality fishing opportunities for many in the quiet waters of the wilderness. This regulation will also enhance future muskellunge fishing opportunities as more fish will be protected from harvest with the potential to increase overall muskellunge size structure in some waters.

This Order is being submitted for information at the September 2012 meeting of the Natural Resources Commission. This Order will be resubmitted for action at the October 2012 meeting of the Natural Resources Commission. This item appeared on the Department's September 2012 calendar, and is eligible for approval on October 11, 2012.

James L. Dexter, Chief
Fisheries Division

Gary Hagler, Chief
Law Enforcement Division

Russ Mason, Ph.D., Chief
Wildlife Division

Bill O'Neill, Chief
Forest Resources Division

Harold Hecker for

Ronald A. Olson, Chief
Parks and Recreation Division

William E. Moritz, Ph.D.
Natural Resources Deputy

ORDER

SPECIAL FISHING REGULATIONS, BIG ISLAND LAKES COMPLEX, SCHOOLCRAFT COUNTY

Under the authority of sections 41101 through 41105 of 1994 PA 451, ~~as amended, being~~ MCL 324.41101 through 324.41105 the Director of the Department of the Natural Resources on October 11, 2012, ordered that for a period not to exceed five years, the following regulations apply in the waters known as the Big Island Lakes Complex:

The Big Island Lakes Complex is described as all lands and waters bounded by County Road 445 on the west, County Road 437 on the south, U. S. Forest Service Haywire Grade Snowmobile Trail on the east and Townline Lake Road on the north. The area includes all connecting waterways and 12 major lakes: Big Island, Townline, Mid, Coattail, McInnes, Klondyke, Ned's, Vance, Twilight, Blush, Byers and Bluegill, all in Schoolcraft County.

1. It shall be unlawful to fish by any means other than hook-and-line.

~~1~~**2**. Artificial lures only~~. The use of spears, nets, bow and arrow, or~~**, use of** live bait is prohibited.

~~2~~**3**. Minimum size limits, possession limits, and open seasons are as follows:

Species	Open Seasons	Min. Size Limit	~~Daily~~/Possession Limit
Muskellunge (including Tiger Muskellunge) (see Note 1)	**May 15 – November 30**	**42 inches**	**1 fish per angling season**
~~Muskellunge or~~ Northern Pike	May 15 – November 30	42 inches	1 fish per day
Bass	Sat. before Memorial Day – November 30	18 inches	1 fish per day
Yellow Perch, Bluegill & Pumpkinseed	Last Sat. in April - November 30	No size limit	5 fish per day in combination
Trout (Ned's & Twilight only)	Last Sat. in April – Sept. 30	15 inches	1 fish per day

Note 1 - A nontransferable Muskellunge Harvest Tag must be obtained prior to harvesting any muskellunge. The tag is at no cost and available at all license vendors. A harvested muskellunge shall be immediately tagged with a validated Muskellunge Harvest Tag. Muskellunge harvest is limited to one (1) muskellunge per angler per year (April 1 – March 31).

~~34~~. ~~No person shall~~**It shall be unlawful to** take or possess any other species of fish from these waters.

This Order shall be assigned number FO-201.13, and is entitled "Special Fishing Regulations, Big Island Lakes Complex, Schoolcraft County."

This Order supersedes the Order entitled "Special Fishing Regulations, Big Island Lakes Complex, Schoolcraft County," which became effective April 1, 2010, and is assigned number FO-201.10.

This Order shall take effect on April 1, 2013. This Order shall remain in effect until March 31, 2018, or until this Order is amended/rescinded, whichever comes first. Although this Order may be reviewed and amended on an annual basis, a review of this Order shall occur no later than August 1, 2017.

Issued on the _____ day of _____, 2012.

Keith Creagh, Director

The Natural Resources Commission has reviewed this Order.

Timothy L. Nichols
Chairperson

Deb Whipple
Executive Secretary