

## Summary of public fisheries strategic planning online survey

Prepared by Tracy Kolb

Map by Matt Tonello

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### BACKGROUND

Fisheries Division is currently engaged in writing a new Strategic Plan. Part of this process calls for the Strategic Planning Team to collect external and internal input on where the division should focus its efforts going forward. Below are the results of the external input gathering process.

### METHODS

On August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012, Jim Dexter, Chief of Fisheries Division emailed Michigan anglers seeking input on the DNR strategic planning process. Anglers were asked to go online and fill out a survey with 22 questions. The survey closed at 8:00 a.m. on August 13<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

### RESULTS

- There were 10,280 respondents that took the online survey. Of those, 118 respondents answered that they were currently a member of an established MDNR Fisheries Citizen Advisory Committee (FCAC).

#### Questions 1 and 2

1. Fisheries Division's draft Mission statement is: "To protect and enhance aquatic life and habitats for the benefit of current and future generations." Does this statement match your perception of what the mission of Fisheries Division should be? (Yes, No or No opinion)
  2. Fisheries Division's draft Vision statement is: "To provide world class freshwater fishing opportunities supported by healthy aquatic environments that enhance the quality of life in Michigan." Does this statement match your perception of what the vision of Fisheries Division should be? (Yes, No or No opinion)
- Responses: Overwhelmingly anglers and members of FCACs agreed with both draft statements (>90%). A few respondents disagreed (7%) and a few had no opinion (<3%).

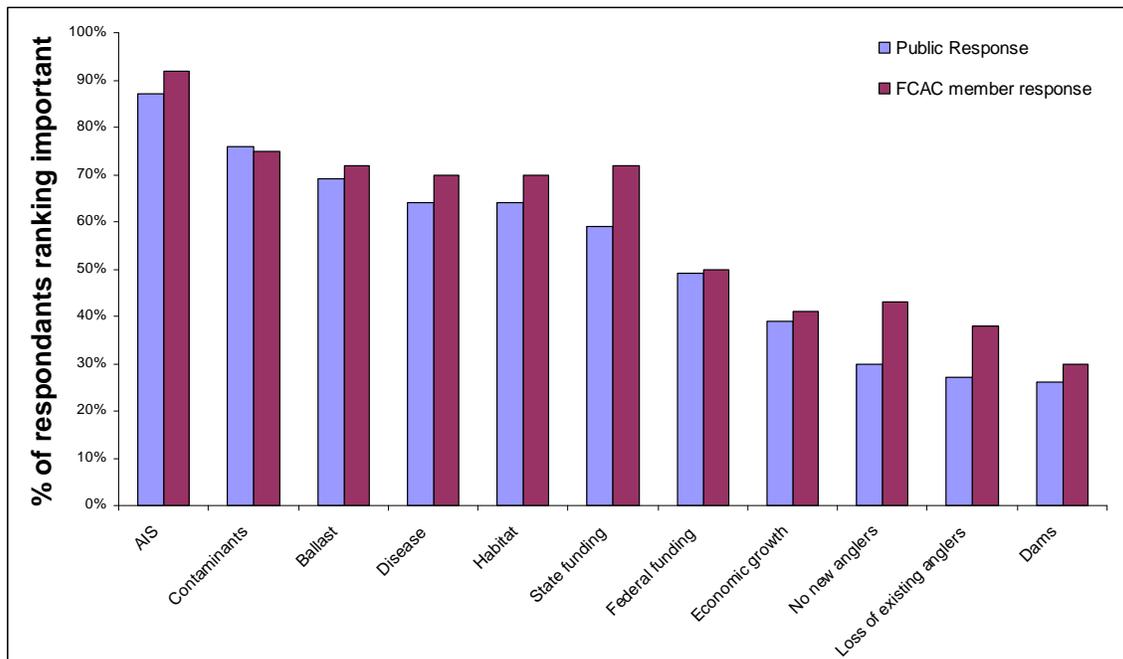
#### Question 3

3. The Fisheries Division faces many management challenges. Rate the importance of each of the following management challenges: (e.g., not important, somewhat important, highly important)
  - Ballast water,
  - Balance between aquatic resource protection and economic growth,
  - Contaminants,
  - Dams,

- Disease outbreaks,
- Federal funding,
- Habitat degradation,
- Invasive species,
- Lack of recruitment of new/young anglers,
- Loss of existing angler participation,
- State funding

➤ *Invasive species* was listed at the most important challenge the MDNR Fisheries Division faces. Members of FCACs ranked *state funding* as ‘higher importance’ than non-members (equal to *ballast water* as the third most important challenge the DNR faces to management – see Figure 1).

Figure 1 – Percentage of respondents that ranked the following challenges as ‘important’ to ‘highly important’ (*management challenge descriptions have been shortened to fit on the x-axis and are organized by descending public ranking of importance*)



#### Questions 4 and 5

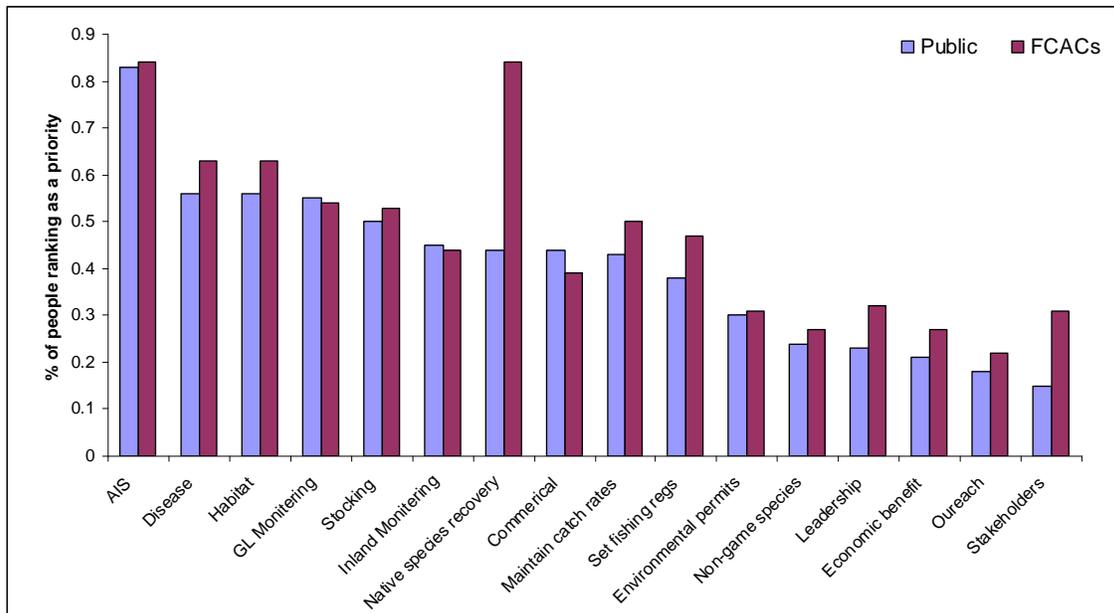
4. Fisheries Division is responsible for managing all fish and aquatic resources for the benefit of the citizens of the State. Given limited financial and staffing resources, the Fisheries Division must prioritize fisheries management activities in order to have the greatest impact on the fishery. Rate the importance of the following management activities for Michigan fisheries: (e.g., not important, somewhat important, and highly important).

- Commercial fisheries management,
- Customer service, education and outreach,

- Environmental permit review,
- Fisheries disease management,
- Great Lakes assessment and monitoring,
- Inland assessment and monitoring,
- Invasive species control,
- Maintain catch rates for popular game fish species,
- Maximizing local economic benefit,
- Native species recovery,
- Non-game fish, amphibian, reptile and mollusk management,
- Protection and rehabilitation of fish habitat,
- Setting recreational fishing regulations,
- Stakeholder communications
- State and inter-agency leadership,
- Stock fish

➤ *Invasive species control* was listed as the number one priority the MDNR Fisheries Division should focus on by both the public and members of FCACs. Members of FCACs ranked *native species recovery* as far more important than non-members of FCACs (tied as the ‘most important’ with *invasive species control*). Members of FCACs also responded that *maintaining catch rates for popular game fish species, setting recreational fishing regulations, state and inter-agency management* and *stakeholder communications* were ‘more important’ than non-members (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Percentage of respondents who indicated the management activity listed was a “priority” for MDNR Fisheries Division (*priority descriptions have been shortened to fit on the x-axis and are organized by descending public ranking of importance*).



5. Given the same list as before (see above), how satisfied are you with the division's performance with respect to the following management activities. Rate your satisfaction with the following management activities for Michigan fisheries (not at all satisfied, somewhat satisfied, satisfied, extremely satisfied and not familiar):

- Both groups were 'satisfied' with the division's handling of *fisheries disease management* and *setting recreational fishing regulations*.
- Both groups were 'somewhat satisfied' with all other management activities, except members of FCACs were more satisfied with Fisheries Division's performance on *maintaining catch rates for popular game fish species* than non-members.
- Members of the public were 'not familiar' with *environment permit review*, *state and intra-agency leadership* and *stakeholder communications*. Members of FCACs were 'somewhat satisfied' in those categories.

Table 1: 'Satisfaction' with Management Priorities (*listed in order of survey-ranked importance, see Figure 2 above, level of 'satisfaction' determined by majority response*)

<b>Priority</b>	<b>Public Satisfaction</b>	<b>FCAC Member Satisfaction</b>
Invasive species control	Somewhat satisfied	Somewhat satisfied
Fisheries disease management	Satisfied	Satisfied
Protection and rehabilitation of fish habitat	Somewhat satisfied	Somewhat satisfied
Great Lakes assessment and monitoring	Somewhat satisfied	Somewhat satisfied
Stocking fish	Somewhat satisfied	Somewhat satisfied
Inland assessment and monitoring	Somewhat satisfied	Somewhat satisfied
Native species recovery	Somewhat satisfied	Somewhat satisfied
Commercial fisheries management	Somewhat satisfied	Somewhat satisfied
Maintain catch rates for popular game fish species	Somewhat satisfied	Satisfied
Setting recreational fishing regulations	Satisfied	Satisfied
Environmental permit review	Not familiar	Somewhat satisfied
Non-game fish, amphibian, reptile and mollusk management	Somewhat satisfied	Somewhat satisfied
State and inter-agency leadership	Not familiar	Somewhat satisfied
Maximizing local economic benefit	Somewhat satisfied	Somewhat satisfied
Customer service, education and outreach	Somewhat satisfied	Somewhat satisfied
Stakeholder communications	Not familiar	Somewhat satisfied

**Question 6**

6. The Fisheries Division is working on a variety of management strategies for Michigan fisheries. Rate your satisfaction with each of the following management strategies (e.g., not at all satisfied, somewhat satisfied, satisfied, extremely satisfied and not familiar)

7.

- Bass management
- Great Lakes salmon management
- Inland trout management
- Lake trout recovery
- Panfish management
- Pike and musky management
- Sturgeon recovery
- Walleye management

➤ The only species-specific management strategy to earn an ‘extremely satisfied’ ranking was *sturgeon recovery*. Members of FCACs were ‘less satisfied’ with *bass and inland trout management* and ‘more satisfied’ with *Great Lakes salmon, panfish, pike and musky management* than the general public. Both sets of respondents were equally ‘satisfied’ with *lake trout and walleye management strategies* (see Table 2).

Table 2: Satisfaction with species-specific management strategies (*level of ‘satisfaction’ determined by majority response*)

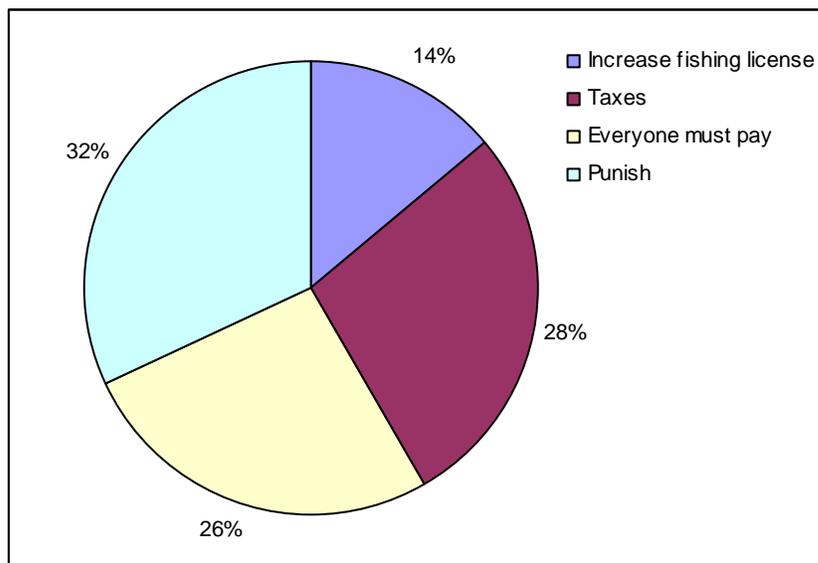
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Public Response</b>	<b>FCAC member response</b>
Bass management	Satisfied	Somewhat satisfied
Commercial fisheries management	Not familiar	Somewhat satisfied
Great Lakes salmon management	Somewhat satisfied	Satisfied
Inland trout management	Satisfied	Somewhat satisfied
Lake trout recovery	Somewhat satisfied	Somewhat satisfied
Panfish management	Somewhat satisfied	Satisfied
Pike and musky management	Somewhat satisfied	Satisfied
Sturgeon recovery	Not familiar	Extremely satisfied
Walleye management	Satisfied	Satisfied

**Question 7**

8. Currently, 95% of Fisheries Division’s funding comes from the sale of fishing licenses and from a Federal tax on fishing equipment. People who believe that fishing, aquatic resources, and associated healthy environments have positive economic and quality of life effects throughout Michigan think funding should be more broadly based. Please indicate your level of agreement with funding Fisheries Division programs and services from the following sources (e.g., strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree, no opinion):

- Michigan angler license fees
  - Michigan boater fees
  - Michigan outdoor recreation fees
  - All Michigan citizens
- Across the board, members of FCACs and non-members of FCACs ‘strongly agreed’ that funding should come from all sources listed.
- There were over 700 write-in responses to this question. Most people either fell into one of four categories:
1. Increase fishing license: “set higher fishing license fees”;
  2. Taxes: “give the DNR a percentage of sales tax on fuel, sales tax in general, set property taxes higher, allocate the DNR green-energy revenue”;
  3. Everyone must pay: “boaters, hikers, birders, mushroom pickers, etc.”;
  4. Punish: “use punitive measures to generate funds (shippers, poachers, developers, polluters, out-of-staters, etc.)”

Figure 3: Percentage of write-in responses that favored the above ways to generate revenue for the DNR (*responses have been shortened for formatting purposes*).



### Question 8

9. How well do you think MDNR Fisheries Division operates as a partner or collaborator at the following levels (e.g., not well, fairly well, well, not familiar)?
- Local
  - Regional

- Statewide
  - Intra-agency
  - Academic or university
  - Public/stakeholders
  - Organized sport groups
- Members of FCACs believed that the MDNR better operated as a partner at the *state level* than the general public, and felt that MDNR partnered ‘well’ with *organized sport groups*, whereas the general public was ‘not familiar’ with MDNR partnership efforts towards those groups.
- Both survey groups were ‘not familiar’ with MDNR partnership efforts at the *intra-agency* and *university* levels.

Table 3: Satisfaction with MDNR partnership (*level of ‘satisfaction’ determined by majority response*)

<b>Partner Level</b>	<b>Public Response</b>	<b>FCAC member response</b>
Local	Fairly well	Fairly well
Regional	Fairly well	Fairly well
Statewide	Fairly well	Well
Intra-agency	Not familiar	Not familiar
Academic or university	Not familiar	Not familiar
Public/stakeholders	Fairly well	Fairly well
Organized sport groups	Not familiar	Well

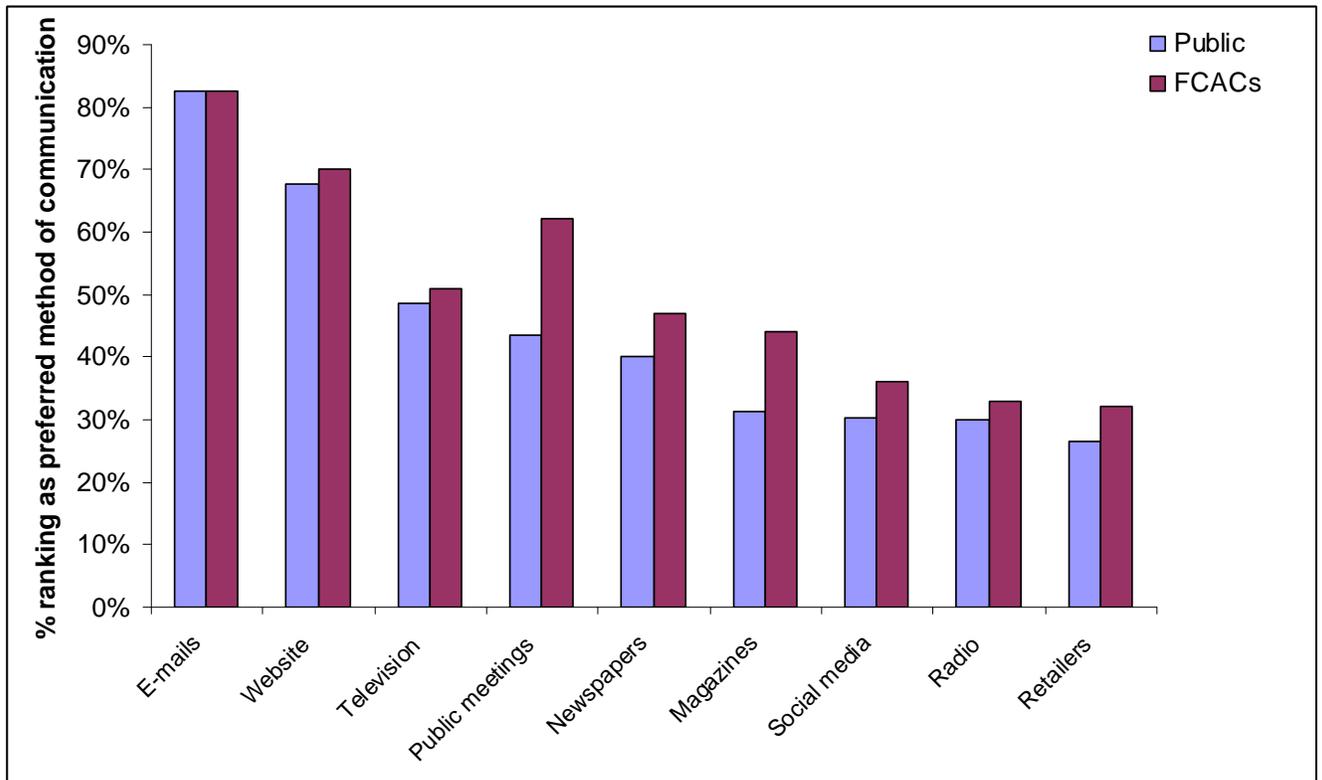
**Question 9**

10. How can MDNR Fisheries Division better communicate with valued constituents/advisors like you about important issues? (select all that apply)

- E-mails
  - MDNR Fisheries Division website
  - Television
  - Public meetings
  - Newspapers
  - Magazines
  - Social media (Twitter, Facebook, etc.)
  - Radio
  - Retailers
- Respondents prefer emails and going to the MDNR website over other communication vectors.

- Members of FCACs preferred public meetings over the general public by ~20% (only 12% of the public respondents had ever even been to a public meeting, whereas 75% of members of FCACs had been to a public meeting).

Figure 4: Preference for communication. Percentage of respondents that listed each category as a method they would like to see the MDNR utilize (*communication descriptions have been shortened to fit on the x-axis and are organized by descending public ranking of importance*).



**Question 10**

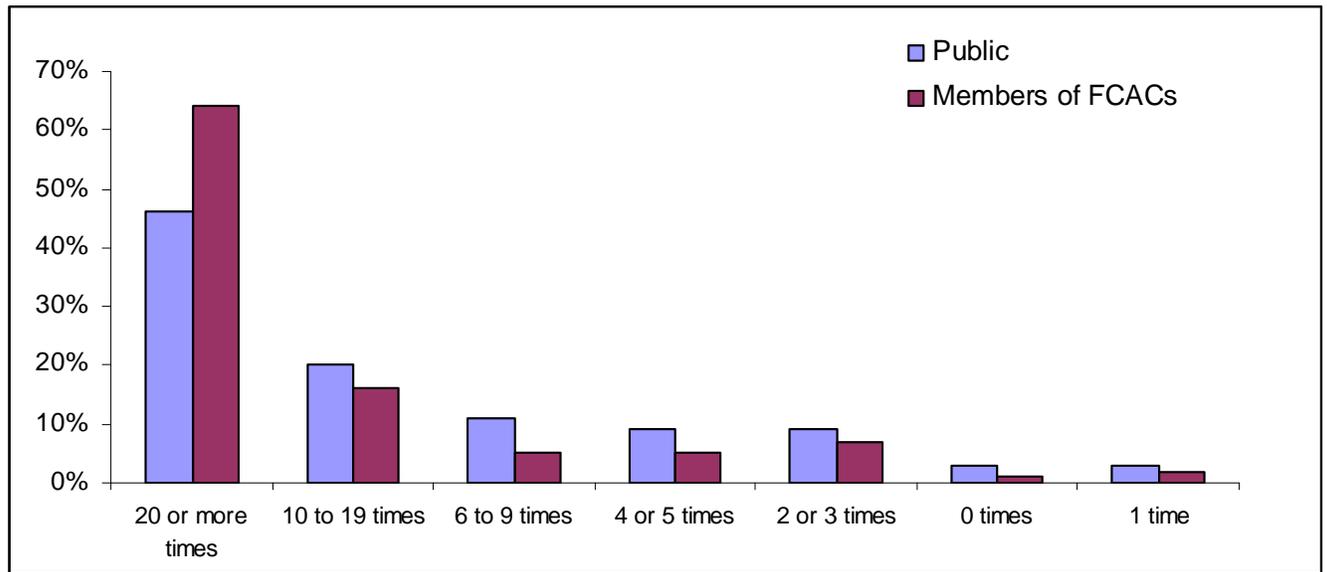
11. Do you have a fishing license?

- Overwhelmingly anglers and members of FCACs had fishing licenses (>95%).

**Question 11**

12. How many times did you go fishing in Michigan in the last 12 months? (select one).

Figure 5: How often do you fish?



**Question 12**

13. In the past 12 months, where did you fish the most? (select one)

- Members of FCACs most often fish rivers and members of the public fish most often fish inland lakes (see Table 4).

Table 4: In the past 12 months, where did you fish the most?

<b>Waterbody</b>	<b>Public</b>	<b>FCAC Members</b>
Inland Lakes	44%	31%
Rivers	27%	36%
Lake Michigan	12%	14%
Lake Huron	7%	9%
Lake St. Clair	5%	6%
Lake Erie	4%	4%
Lake Superior	1%	0%

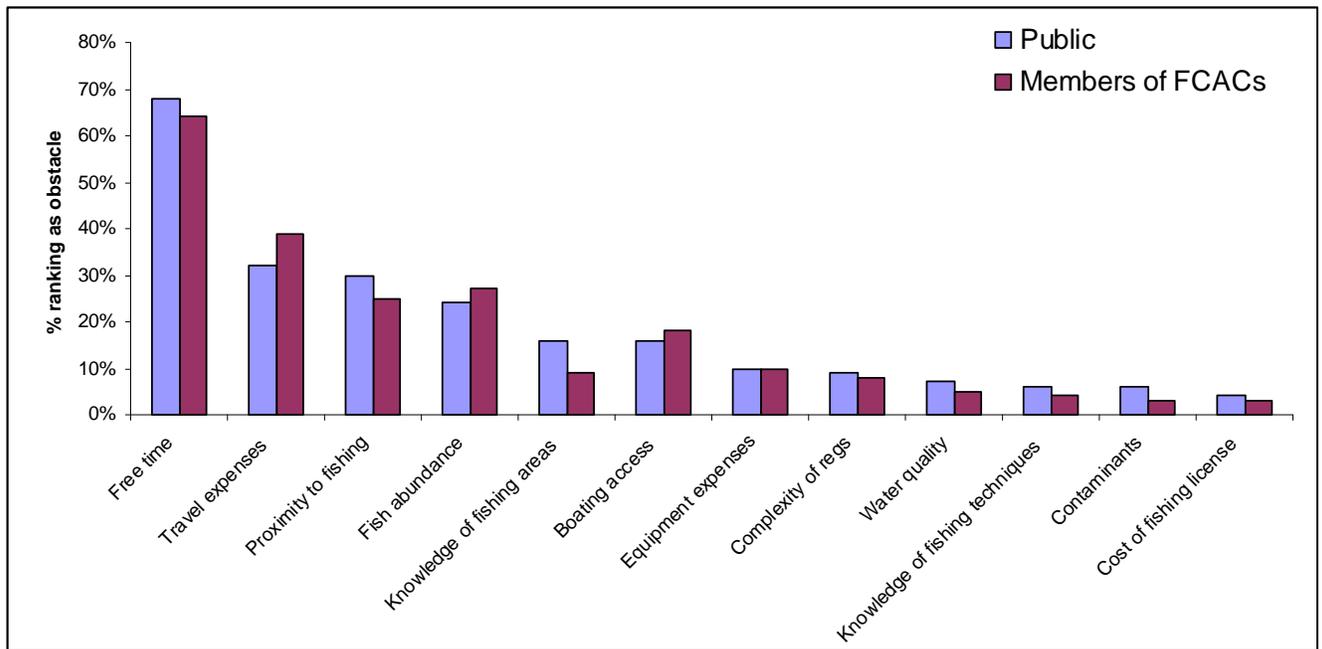
### Question 13

13. What prevents you from fishing at all or fishing more often? (select all that apply)

- Lack of free time
- Travel-related expenses
- Proximity to fishing location
- Fish abundance
- Limited knowledge of fishing areas
- Boating access
- Equipment-related expenses
- Complexity of fishing regulations
- Water quality
- Limited knowledge of fishing techniques
- Contaminants in fish
- Cost of fishing license

- *Lack of free time* is listed more than double the amount of times as the next more likely reasons and *cost of fishing license* is least as an obstacle to fishing.
- Members of CFACs listed *limited knowledge of fishing areas* as less of an impediment as the general public.

Figure 6: Percentage of respondents who indicated the obstacle listed as an impediment to their fishing frequency (*obstacle descriptions have been shortened to fit on the x-axis and are organized by descending public ranking of importance*).



There were also hundreds of write-in responses to this question, and most fit with one of the categories above but some that didn't were:

- Poor health/old age (25%)
- Lack of fishing opportunities for anglers with disabilities (15%)
- Low water levels (10%)
- Wives (1%)

#### **Question 14**

14. In the past 12 months have you attended any fisheries-related public meetings, citizen advisory committee meetings or other fisheries meetings?

- 12% of the public respondents had been to a public meeting, whereas 75% of members of FCACs had been to a meeting

#### **Question 15**

15. Are you a current member of a fishing organization or association? (select all that apply)

- About 15% of public respondents belonged to an organized angling group. The most popular were:
  - Anglers of the Au Sable
  - B.A.S.S.
  - Charter Boat Association
  - Federation of Fly Fishers
  - Flygirls
  - Muskies Inc.
  - MUCC
  - Michigan Fly Fishing Club
  - North American Fishing Club
  - Steelheaders
  - Trout Unlimited
  - Local angler groups (e.g., Hammond Bay anglers, Manistee county sport fish association, etc)
  - Friends groups for waterbodies

#### **Question 16**

16. Do you belong to a Citizen's Fishery Advisory Committee?

- 118 respondents answered that they were currently a member of an established MDNR Fisheries Citizen Advisory Committee (FCAC).

**Question 17**

17. Are you male or female?

- The majority of anglers and members of FCACs were men (>97%).

**Question 18**

18. What is your age?

- The average age of a respondent was 53 and the standard deviation was 25 years.

**Question 19**

19. What is your highest level of education? (select one)

- Most of the public (>91%) had some college or post-college education (majority were college-educated).
- Members of FCACs were even more educated with the majority having post-graduate degrees.

**Question 20**

20. What is your race or ethnic background? (select all that apply)

- The majority of respondents were white (>98%).

**Question 21**

21. Which of the following best describes your annual household income? (select one)

- The majority of respondents made between 50-75K

## Question 22

22. What is your zip code?

Figure 7: Map of Michigan counties with the count of surveys from each county.

- After checking with the secretary of state, this roughly approximates the population levels of the various counties indicating we have spatially-balanced survey results
- Note: Crawford, Manistee, Mason, Otsego and Gogebic are slightly over-represented and Lenawee, Sanilac and St. Joseph are slightly under-represented.

