

# CHARTING THE COURSE:

## FISHERIES DIVISION'S FRAMEWORK FOR MANAGING AQUATIC RESOURCES

*2018-2022 Fisheries Division Strategic Plan*



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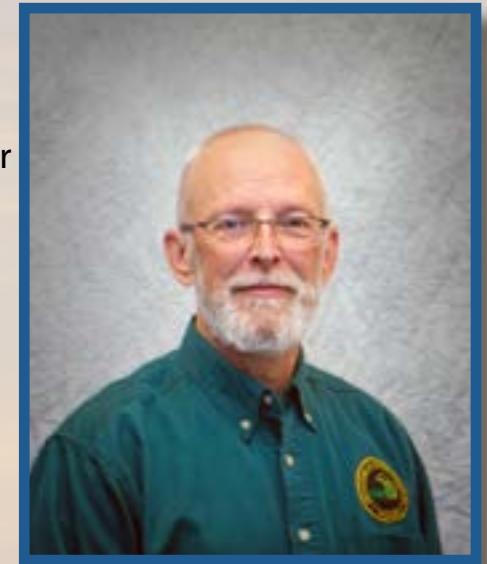
# WELCOME

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Dear Citizens,

Michigan's aquatic resources are considered world class by many anglers who appreciate their impressive appeal and their role in creating life-long memories.

In 2012 the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Fisheries Division developed an ambitious five-year strategic plan to guide our actions in protecting and enhancing those world-class resources through the year 2017. As that time period was coming to a close, we evaluated the effectiveness of that plan, together with our constituents, to determine steps for moving forward.



That evaluation process indicated that this plan, *Charting the Course*, had provided the right direction to effectively and efficiently manage Michigan's aquatic resources for current and future generations. As a result we have spent the past year enhancing the original plan to produce actions slated to occur during the next five years.

The division's **2018-2022 Strategic Plan** will continue to prioritize our work as we strive to protect, rehabilitate and enhance the state's fish populations and to provide some of the best freshwater fishing opportunities in the world.

A hearty thank you goes out to the numerous individuals and organizations who have invested their time and energy in this plan, as well as the work that follows. We are excited about the next five years and hope that you are too.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James Dexter".

Jim Dexter, Chief  
DNR Fisheries Division

# MISSION, VISION & VALUES

## 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.

## Fisheries Division Values:

The following six values guide the work of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Fisheries Division:

- Integrity
- Leadership
- Professionalism
- Collaboration
- Innovation
- Transparency

**DNR Mission:** The Michigan Department of Natural Resources is committed to the conservation, protection, management, use and enjoyment of the state's natural and cultural resources for current and future generations.

### DNR Goals:

- Protect natural and cultural resources.
- Ensure sustainable recreation use and enjoyment.
- Enable strong natural resource-based economies.
- Improve and build relationships and partnerships.
- Foster effective business practices and good governance.

# OVERVIEW

This strategic plan charts the course for Fisheries Division's programs and activities for the next five years. The plan identifies priorities that focus our actions and resources to more efficiently and effectively fulfill our mission – to protect and enhance Michigan's aquatic life and habitats for the benefit of current and future generations.

This plan, originally developed in 2012, was revised with guidance from employees, partners and the public. These groups were surveyed to assess the division's programs and activities, and the results were used to develop the strategic direction outlined in the plan. This engagement process ensures that our employees and stakeholders are working toward common goals and have a shared vision to provide world-class freshwater fishing opportunities, supported by healthy aquatic environments. This plan is representative of the work that is done by Fisheries Division and our partners, who together enhance the quality of life in Michigan.

The revised strategic plan recognizes a number of challenges that we, as a division, will face over the next five years. Fish populations and their habitats will encounter increasing stress from the establishment and continued spread of invasive species, disease outbreaks, habitat changes due to landscape development, climate change, and competing water uses. In addition, we are likely to experience a reduction in angler recruitment as people choose to participate in different outdoor activities. Finally, our operations will be affected by a smaller workforce, a significant turnover in staff due to retirement, aging equipment and facilities, and outdated computer programs. The division's revised strategic plan is responsive to these challenges, aims to create efficiencies, and takes advantage of new opportunities to address current and emerging issues.

The **2018-2022 Strategic Plan** identifies five goals for the division that will protect and enhance Michigan's aquatic life and habitats and provide sustainable fishing opportunities today and into the future. Within each goal are a set of objectives and strategies that will direct the work of Fisheries Division. These elements are all equally important and are not listed in priority order. The plan also identifies a list of specific actions that will help us fulfill our mission and vision. Although not exhaustive, the list provides a framework of activities and replaces the tactical plan that was included with the **2013-2017 Strategic Plan**. These actions will be evaluated each year and will help us measure our success.

Effective implementation of the strategic plan will require incorporating the plan into all aspects of the division's operations. The strategic plan will be used to evaluate the current staffing plan and identify realistic time and resource requirements to accomplish our goals. The strategic plan will also serve as the guiding framework to identify priority actions in annual work plans, develop employee performance objectives, and document progress in annual accomplishment reports. Tying the plan directly to these activities will ensure it is being constantly evaluated, so each year we will

have a better understanding of what we have accomplished and what we have left to achieve. Successful implementation will also require an awareness about and investment in the plan by all division staff. Connecting employees with the division's strategic plan is therefore essential.

We are excited about this plan and the course it charts for the division to move us forward into the future. This plan will enable us to strategically address natural resource challenges and take advantage of emerging opportunities while providing outstanding customer service. We look forward to working with our constituents and others to implement these goals, objectives and strategies. Our collective efforts will benefit the aquatic resources in Michigan and improve the quality of life for all.



# GOALS, OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES

## Goal 1: Ensure Healthy Aquatic Ecosystems & Sustainable Fisheries

**Description:** This goal recognizes that healthy lakes and streams and proper management are necessary to support aquatic life, exceptional fishing opportunities, and enhance quality of life.

### Objective 1: Conserve and manage aquatic species and their habitats.

**Strategy 1:** Protect and enhance natural reproduction of native and desirable naturalized aquatic species.

**Strategy 2:** Stock fish and other aquatic species as appropriate to achieve sustainable aquatic communities, rehabilitate populations, and meet management needs.

**Strategy 3:** Develop and adhere to guidance documents for management of aquatic species and habitat.

**Strategy 4:** Participate in and influence decisions about habitat protection, rehabilitation and stewardship efforts.

**Strategy 5:** Develop and implement adaptive management to respond to natural changes and those caused by human activity.

**Strategy 6:** Protect and enhance nongame and rare species.

### Objective 2: Create, maintain and enhance diverse fishing opportunities.

**Strategy 1:** Identify areas where fishing access is needed, prioritize locations, and work with partners to address these needs.

**Strategy 2:** Use fish stocking to create new or enhance existing fishing opportunities.

**Strategy 3:** Implement fishing regulations to manage the state's fisheries and create unique fishing opportunities.

### Objective 3: Implement an aquatic invasive species (AIS) management program.

**Strategy 1:** Prevent introductions of new aquatic invasive species.

**Strategy 2:** Control the spread of existing aquatic invasive species.

**Strategy 3:** Monitor existing aquatic invasive species populations.

**Objective 4:** Ensure sustainability of fish populations that support commercial and tribal fishing.

**Strategy 1:** Oversee the licensing, regulation of and administration of the state-licensed commercial fishery.

**Strategy 2:** Coordinate with tribes to manage commercial and subsistence fishing by implementing formal and informal agreements.

### *Representative actions for Goal 1:*

- Conduct environmental permit reviews.
- Update the status of species and habitats identified in the Wildlife Action Plan.
- Protect and rehabilitate aquatic habitat through administration of the Aquatic Habitat Grant Program and the Dam Management Grant Program.
- Produce healthy fish to meet annual fish rearing targets.
- Monitor, assess and adapt to effects of climate change on aquatic resources.
- Implement Fisheries Orders' processes.
- Review and issue public stocking permits.
- Collaborate with the Quality of Life Invasive Species Workgroup to implement a statewide Early Detection and Response Program.
- Work with tribal partners to develop and implement 2020 Consent Decree.
- Implement a new electronic reporting system for commercial, wholesale and charter.
- Maintain and improve biosecurity measures during fish production and egg-take procedures.

## Goal 2: Promote Effective Communication, Outreach & Education

**Description:** This goal focuses on the need for and value of strategic communication with a variety of audiences and the importance of educating the public to cultivate future generations of anglers and aquatic resource stewards.

### Objective 1: Improve internal and external communication.

# GOALS, OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES

**Strategy 1:** Identify and address communication needs and gaps.

**Strategy 2:** Produce an internal communication plan.

**Objective 2:** Increase public awareness of Michigan's diverse fisheries.

**Strategy 1:** Promote diverse fishing opportunities statewide by providing targeted and timely information and updates to specific regions, demographics, interest groups and the media.

**Strategy 2:** Instill awareness and appreciation of Michigan's fish, fishing heritage and fishing opportunities into the culture, education and consciousness of all Michigan citizens.

**Strategy 3:** Increase the number of people visiting fisheries-related facilities (weirs, hatcheries, etc.).

**Objective 3:** Increase participation and interest in fishing among all demographic groups.

**Strategy 1:** Identify and address what deters people from fishing or from buying fishing licenses.

**Strategy 2:** Work with other divisions to increase fishing license sales.

**Strategy 3:** Provide education and outreach through existing and new programs.



## ***Representative actions for Goal 2:***

- Use current and emerging tools and technology to communicate (e.g., GovDelivery, social media).
- Enhance the online version of the Michigan Fishing Guide.
- Establish partnerships to reach untapped audiences.
- Provide state parks and recreation areas with fishing-related materials.
- Support youth-friendly fishing programs at state fish hatcheries.
- Conduct targeted surveys geared towards Recreation Passport users and youth to discover the deterrents to fishing participation/license sales.
- Explore methods used by other states and organizations for communication with staff and the public.

## **Goal 3: Improve & Build Strategic Resource Partnerships**

**Description:** Managing the wealth of aquatic resources available in Michigan can't be done alone. The DNR's Fisheries Division values the partnerships it has developed and continues to develop and recognizes the critical needs they meet to help us accomplish our goals.

**Objective 1:** Achieve fisheries management goals through partnerships.

**Strategy 1:** Assume leadership roles and fully participate in fisheries management and regulatory processes involving interjurisdictional resources (e.g., Great Lakes, interstate, U.S./Canadian and tribal).

**Strategy 2:** Work with partners to optimize fish production, habitat rehabilitation efforts, and decision support tools.

**Strategy 3:** Support department efforts to increase angler recruitment, retention and reactivation through external partnerships.

**Objective 2:** Promote aquatic resource stewardship and watershed management.

**Strategy 1:** Support programs that educate the public about aquatic resources and stewardship.

**Strategy 2:** Participate in regional prosperity networks.

# GOALS, OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES

**Strategy 3:** Facilitate watershed management by developing diverse partnerships.

## **Representative actions for Goal 3:**

- Participate in the Great Lakes Fishery Commission's lake and technical committees.
- Implement Michigan's Arctic Grayling Initiative Action Plan.
- Develop and maintain relationships with local and regional groups (e.g., Michigan Lake and Stream Association, MiCorps and Natural Shoreline Partnership).
- Work with Michigan State University, Sturgeon For Tomorrow and tribal hatcheries for lake sturgeon rearing.
- Partner with Cooperative Invasive Species Management Areas.
- Participate in the Midwest Glacial Lakes Partnership.
- Engage citizen fishery advisory committees.
- Participate in the Asian Carp Regional Coordinating Committee.

## **Goal 4: Develop Strategically Focused Assessments & Decision Support Tools**

**Description:** Fisheries Division values adaptive management and decision making that is transparent and based on sound science.

**Objective 1:** Conduct comprehensive assessments of fish and other aquatic life, habitat and aquatic resource users, and prepare timely reports.

**Strategy 1:** Conduct surveys to evaluate/assess fish and aquatic life on the Great Lakes and inland waters.

**Strategy 2:** Assess habitat in inland and Great Lakes waters.

**Strategy 3:** Assess public opinions, attitudes and participation related to angling and aquatic resources.

**Strategy 4:** Summarize and analyze survey data and prepare reports on a timely basis.

**Objective 2:** Develop new and improve existing decision-support tools to optimize the management of Michigan's fisheries and aquatic resources.

**Strategy 1:** Continue development of spatial databases and web-based tools to support fisheries management.

**Strategy 2:** Develop, refine and implement stock assessment models and tools for intensively managed species.

**Strategy 3:** Assist other state and federal agencies to refine the water withdrawal assessment tool.

## **Objective 3: Evaluate fisheries management actions.**

**Strategy 1:** Evaluate the success and cost effectiveness of select stocking events and species.

**Strategy 2:** Evaluate the success and cost effectiveness of habitat improvement projects.

**Strategy 3:** Conduct reviews of key regulatory decisions.

## **Representative actions for Goal 4:**

- Produce Status of the Fishery Resource reports.
- Utilize Structured Decision Making where appropriate.
- Collaborate with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Geological Survey on fisheries surveys.
- Implement the Resource Inventory Program (status and trends, management evaluations, walleye population estimates).
- Support and collaborate with Partnerships for Ecosystem Research and Management on quantitative fish models.
- Implement the Statewide Angler Survey Program.
- Update the Aquatic Habitat Viewer and Michigan Fishing Information System.
- Develop and implement a new Fish Collection System application.
- Conduct surveys to evaluate specific regulations (e.g., protected slot limits for northern pike, reduced muskellunge size limits).
- Provide cost per species reports for hatchery fish.
- Mark salmonids for evaluation of movement and natural reproduction.

# GOALS, OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES

## Goal 5: Foster Efficient Division Operations

**Description:** The work of the *2018-2022 Strategic Plan* should be done in the most effective and efficient ways possible. This goal provides direction for ensuring the division uses all of its resources to its fullest capacity.

**Objective 1:** Align staff, physical assets and financial resources to accomplish Fisheries Division's Strategic Plan goals.

**Strategy 1:** Regularly review and revise as necessary a division staffing plan that addresses current needs and anticipates future changes in staff.

**Strategy 2:** Align and coordinate staff resources to maximize effectiveness across basins, units and sections.

**Strategy 3:** Seek and incorporate new and emerging technologies and techniques.

**Strategy 4:** Enhance and maintain equipment and facilities.

**Strategy 5:** Review work plan activities on an annual basis, document accomplishments, and identify areas in need of improvement.

**Objective 2:** Streamline Fisheries Division programs and decision-making processes.

**Strategy 1:** Conduct periodic reviews of all Fisheries Division programs.

**Strategy 2:** Continue to support decision-making authority at the lowest appropriate level.

**Objective 3:** Hire, train and retain employees within Fisheries Division.

**Strategy 1:** Boost and monitor employee morale.

**Strategy 2:** Create and maintain desirable work environments.

**Strategy 3:** Implement a continual employee recognition program.

**Strategy 4:** Encourage professional development and succession planning by providing training opportunities, promoting involvement in professional organizations, and facilitating access to relevant information.

### *Representative actions for Goal 5:*

- Evaluate feasibility of consolidating hatchery production.
- Replace legacy computer applications (e.g., Fish Collection System, Fish Stocking Information System and Prescription System).
- Encourage coordination among sections during work plan development.
- Align work plan development with Strategic Plan goals.
- Conduct energy audits at Fisheries Division facilities.
- Conduct Lean Process Improvement reviews of division programs.
- Assess staff and supervisor performance.
- Recognize employee accomplishments and service (e.g., awards and Governor's coins).
- Solicit staff training needs and align opportunities with job specifications/levels.





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