State Licensed Commercial Fishery

MFPA – 2016

Presented by Tom Goniea

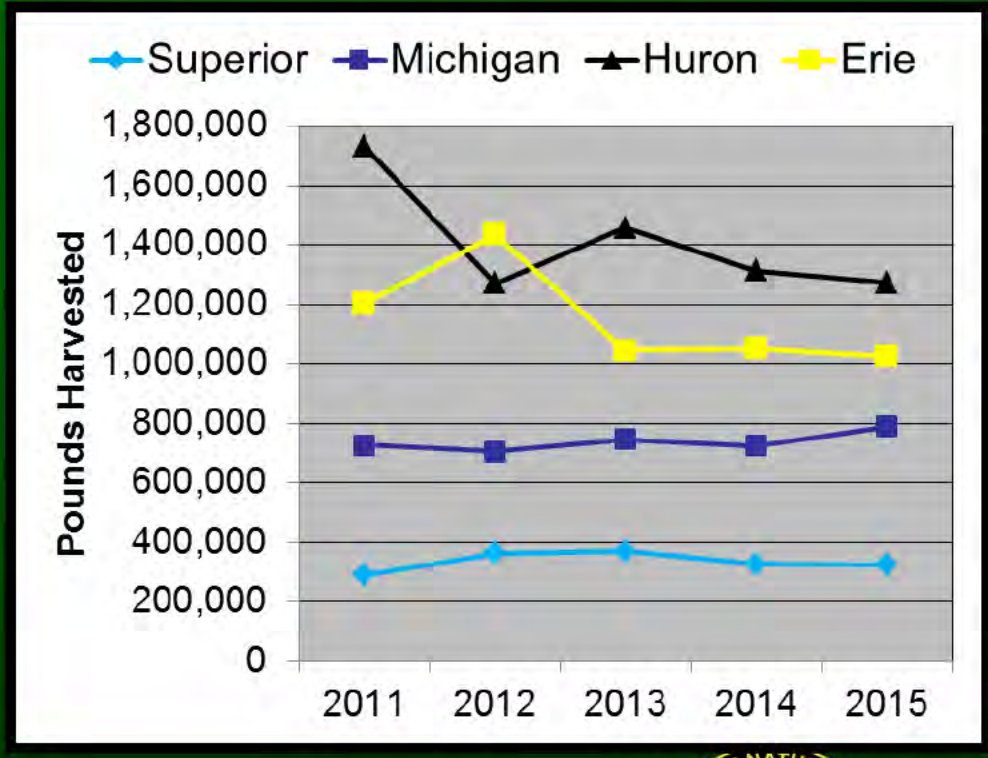
1/22/2016

Topics

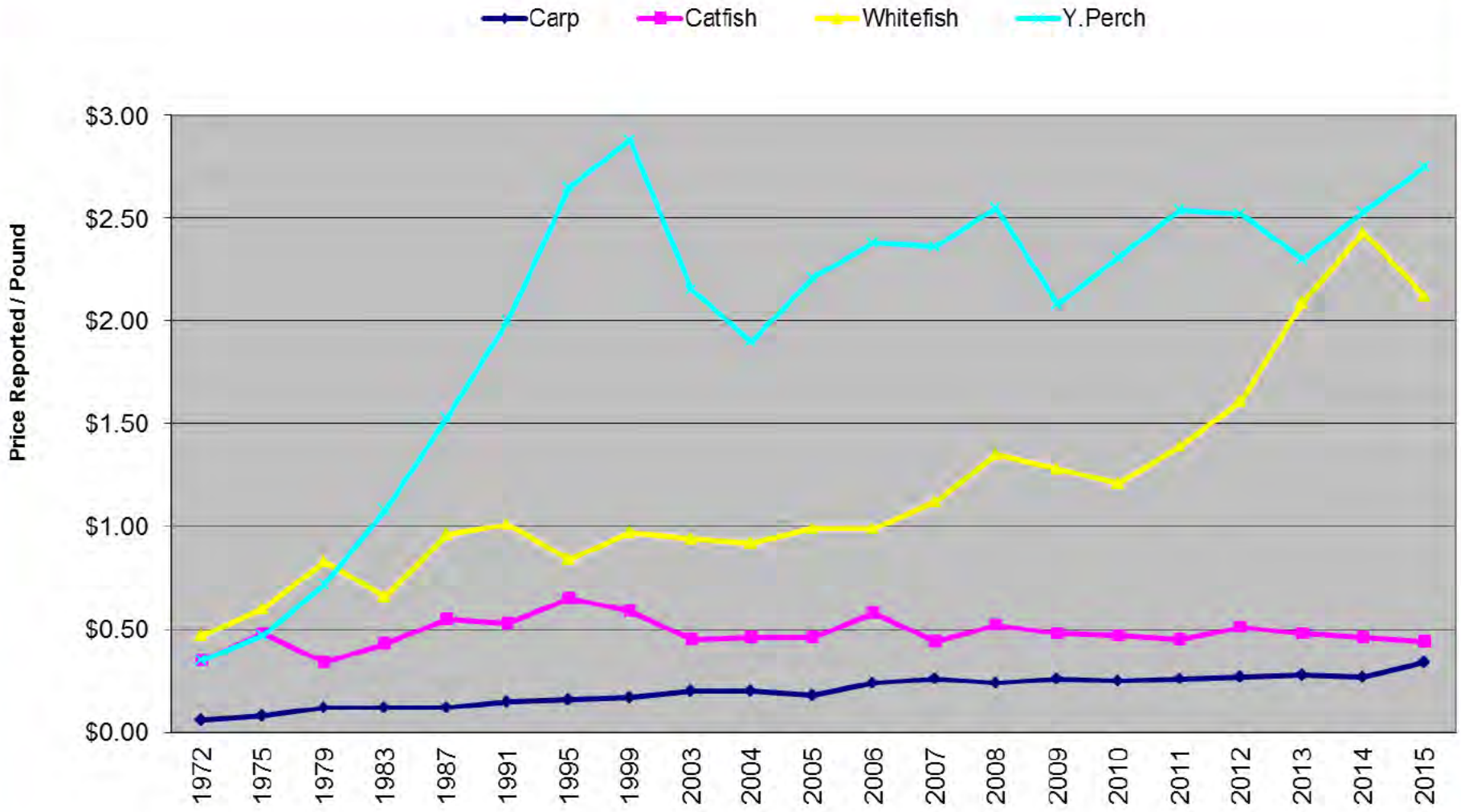
- Fishery Trends
- Public Outreach
- Commercial Monitoring
- Grass Carp Lake Erie
- Lean Process Review
- Real-time Reporting
- Fisheries Orders
- L. Michigan Management Plan
- Saginaw Bay & Harbor Beach
- LED's annual update
- Statute Rewrite

Fishery Trends 2014-2015

- Participation: **Constant**
- Harvest Trends: **Down**
  - L. Superior: Within 0.5%
  - L. Michigan: Up 8.2%
  - L. Huron: Down 3.1%
  - L. Erie: Down 2.3%



Fishery Trends: Price



Fishery Trends: 2016 Quotas

- Lake Michigan: Mixed
  - 3 within 1%
  - 1 down about 8%
- Lake Superior: Mixed
  - 1 up 27%
  - 1 down 18%
- Model outputs, quotas, & population status will be discussed tomorrow

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
DNR
MICHIGAN

2016 Quotas

- Quota Responsibility:
  - It is the responsibility of the licensee to keep track of their catch and cease fishing upon reaching their assigned quota.
  - Over fishing quota is a violation of license condition.

2016 Harvest Reporting

- Consent Decree: Whitefish (**Round Wt**)
  - Dressed weight X **1.17** = round weight
  - EXAMPLE: 1,000 dressed lbs x 1.17 = 1,170 round lbs

2015 Public Outreach

Fish Division Goal: “Raise public awareness about Michigan commercial fishing”

Catalyst: Recreational license fee increase.

Overall DNR Goal: Better understanding of the DNR.

2015 Public Outreach

- April 28th: Press Release
  - Summarized:
    - 2014 Harvest
    - 2014 Value
    - Number of Licenses
    - Make up of Catch (WF)

Copies in back of room!

NOTE: Spring of 2016

State-licensed commercial fishing up more than 5 percent in value from previous year

Michigan DNR sent this bulletin at 04/28/2015 09:30 AM EDT

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 28, 2015

Contact: Tom Goniea, 517-284-5825 or Ed Golder, 517-284-5815

State-licensed commercial fishing up more than 5 percent in value from previous year

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources recently released data from its 2014 state-licensed commercial fishing season. Combined, the state-licensed commercial fishery caught nearly 3,414,000 pounds of fish with an estimated wholesale dockside value of more than $5.8 million prior to processing, marketing and retail sales.

While the state's total harvest was about 200,000 pounds less than in 2013, the fishery's estimated gross dockside value was up $300,000 (more than 5 percent). The increase in the fishery's value is almost exclusively attributed to a more-than-15-percent increase in the wholesale price of lake whitefish. This species' value has gone up more than 50 percent in the past two years.

"Lake whitefish is by far the most important commercial fish species in the Great Lakes, and a delicious option many consumers will find at their favorite local Michigan restaurant or retailer," said Tom Goniea, DNR commercial fisheries biologist. "The price of whitefish has been on the rise since 2010, but the increase in demand has accelerated in the past couple of years."

Lake whitefish accounted for more than 67 percent of the state-licensed harvest by pounds and 84 percent of the gross value during the last decade.

Participation in the fishery in 2014 remained constant from the previous year. Of the 51 state licenses issued, 31 were actively fished by 20 separate businesses. Eleven of these businesses fished in Lake Huron, five in Lake Michigan, three in Lake Superior and one in Lake Erie. Together, these businesses added an estimated $25 million to the state's economy and approximately 300 fishing and fishing-related jobs.

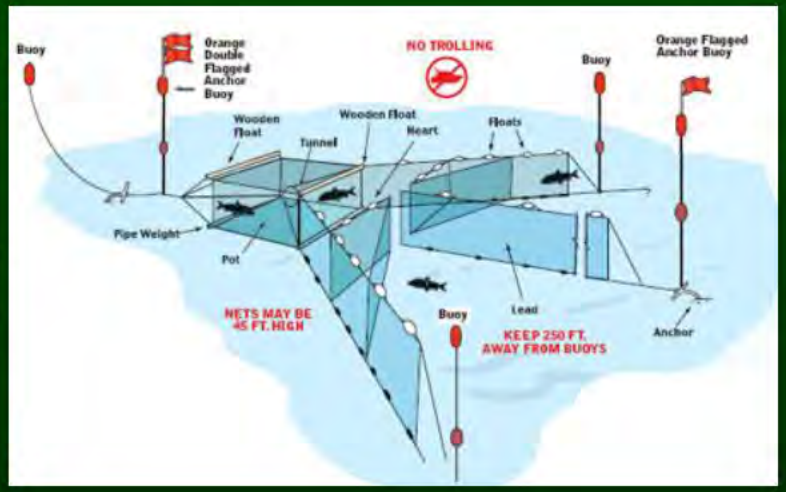
A full breakdown of the harvest and dockside value of the 2014 state-licensed commercial fishery, including details for each individual lake is available online.

Also available are an in-depth description of Michigan's commercial fishery, photos of the fishers in action and maps of the Great Lakes with recent commercial fishing activity, as well as links to recipes and locations where Michigan fish can be purchased.

2015 Public Outreach

"The Story of State-licensed Commercial Fishing History on the Great Lakes" website.

- Launched in 2014.
- Updated with the 2014 harvest/value data
- The site was visited 4,557 times in 2015.



2015-16 Public Outreach

"State-licensed Commercial Bait harvest in Michigan" website.

- Being developed this winter to highlight and promote the Michigan bait industry.
- Field visits were made with commercial bait catchers in 2015.
- A department showcasing story was released in December.

2015 Commercial Monitoring

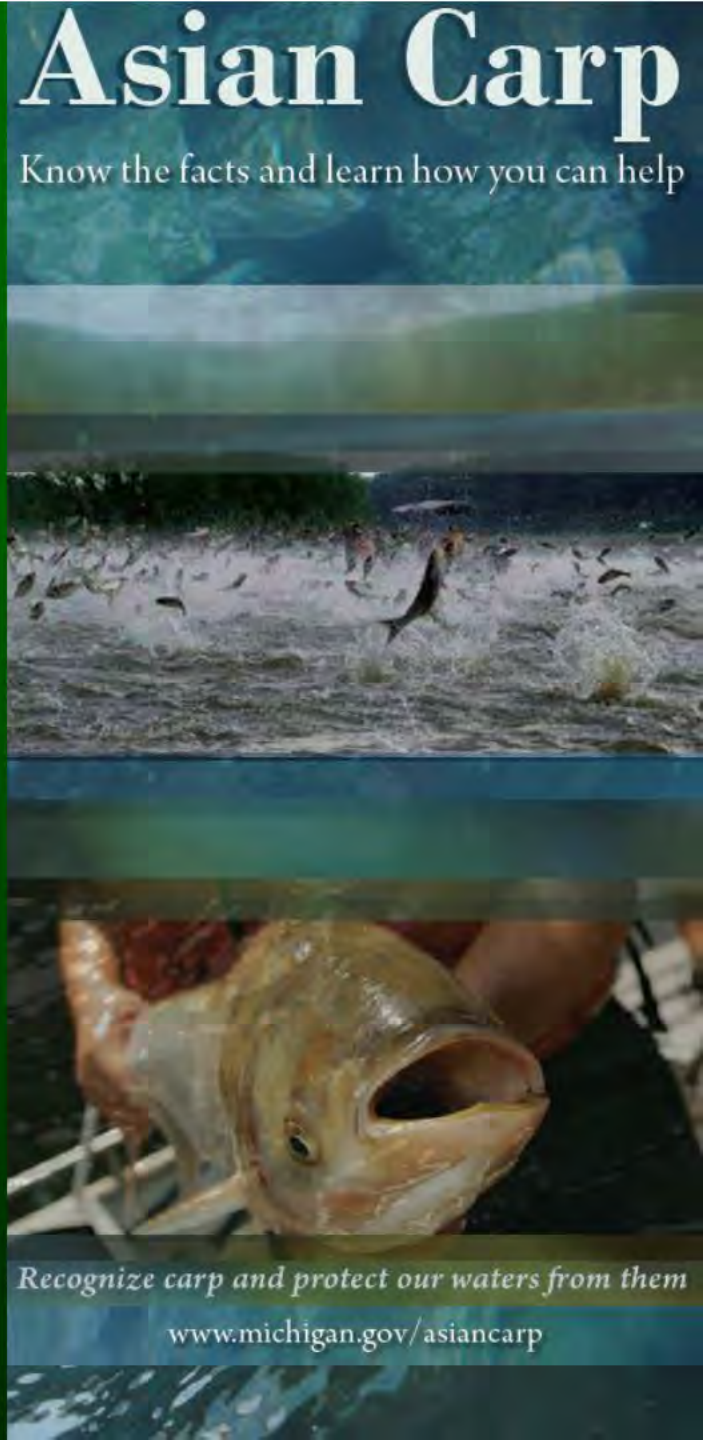
- I made 2 trips to Saginaw Bay
  - Yellow perch age and growth data

2015 Commercial Monitoring

- I made 4 trips to Muskegon
  - –Whitefish age and growth data

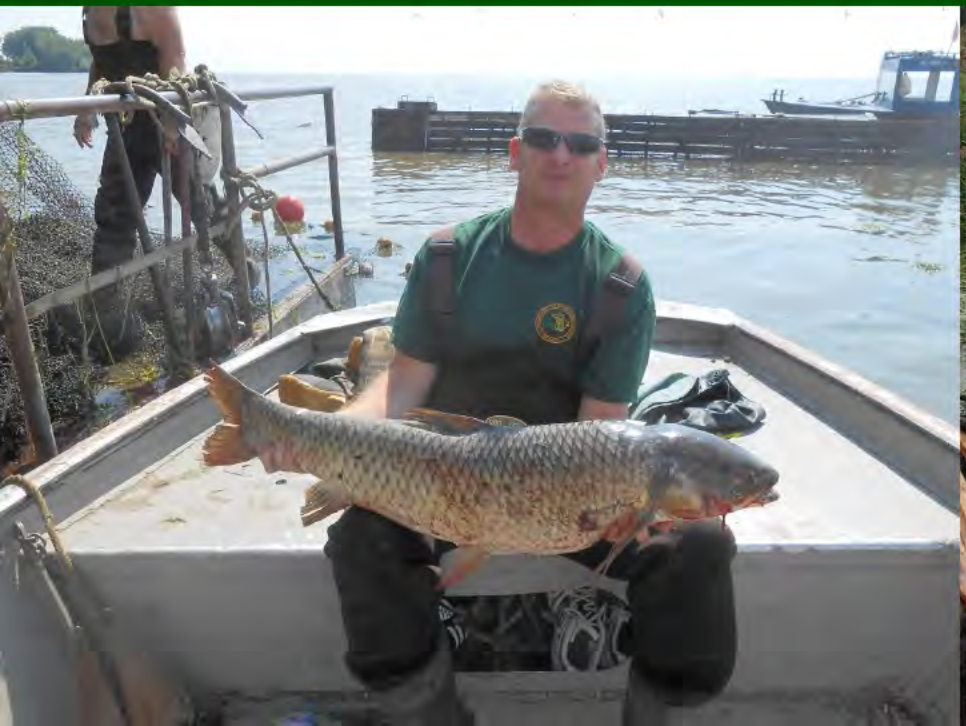
2015 Invasive Species

- What should you do?
  - Lookout for anything out of the ordinary.
  - **Do Not Release!!**
    - Ice down any suspect fish
    - Call me immediately



Grass Carp

- 2014 and 2015: Two studies in Lake Erie
  - CMU: Reproductive Capacity & Origin (complete Mar 2016)
  - MSU: Seasonal Movement Patterns & Tributary Use (to continued through 2016.



Grass Carp

- Lake Erie: 2014 - 2016
  - Partnered with Blair Fisheries to collect and remove fish.
  - 26 fish were taken in the last two years.
    - 3 were tagged and 23 collected for biodata.

Lean Process Initiative (LPI)

- Streamline and update the collection, entry, storage, retrieval of commercial, wholesale and charter boat fisheries data.
- 4 day workshop in May + 2 days in July
- FD, LED, Commercial Fish, Wholesale, Charter, Tribal representation.

LPI Expectations

- A software platform to report data electronically.
- System that can capture and process real-time reporting of data.
- Consistent and Standard way to exchange data.
- A solution for customers to provide timely reports.
- A solution to receiving data that is accurate and appropriately sequenced.

LPI Recommendations

- Update respective statutes
- In corporate charter, wholesale, and commercial licensing into RSS (electronic)
- Create a new online database for charter, wholesale, and commercial reporting (electronic).
- Promote 4 or more new LED positions within the enforcement unit
- Establish a commercial fishing advisory council.
- Education, outreach, and training.

Real-Time Reporting 2015

- Estimated whitefish harvest and arrival times at the dock prior to landing.
- We had multiple testers in 2015.
- System failure on the DNR side.
  - Information was received but not transferred.
- Suspended for 2016, but…
  - An LPI work group is investigating other possibilities.

Fisheries Orders 2015

- Two updates to commercial fish order 243 were signed.
- Notifications were sent out at the time of issuance.
- These updates were recommended by the office of legal services and clarified long held fisheries regulations/practices.
  - Example: the Nov 1st to Nov 30th whitefish closure.
  - Example: commercial research permits.
- Dexter will talk more about these when discussing the statute rewrite.

L. Michigan Management Plan

Saginaw Bay
Perch & Walleye Management

Saginaw Bay
Perch & Walleye Management

- Anglers are demanding the something be done to improve yellow perch populations.
- Perch are reproducing well but YOY survival is very low.
- Predators including cormorants and walleye are significant factors in declining perch.
- A five tiered management approach was implemented in 2015…

Saginaw Bay
Perch & Walleye Management

1. Reintroduction of lake herring.

2. Additional cormorant management in 2015 and 2016.

Saginaw Bay
Perch & Walleye Management

3. Increased recreational harvest of walleye on the bay and river.
   A. Decrease the size limit from 15 to 13 inches.
   B. Increase the daily bag limit from 5 to 8 fish.

4. Reduce the daily recreational bag limit for perch from 50 to 25 on the bay and river.

Saginaw Bay
Perch & Walleye Management

5. Reduce the number of licenses and nets commercially fishing for yellow perch on Saginaw Bay.

*Harbor Beach Research Opportunity

Harbor Beach

Objectives of S.B.

- Remove the largest amount of licenses and gear from S.B. possible.
  - Emphasis on actively fished licenses and trap nets.
- Reduce harvest in S.B. by the highest amount possible.
  - 1st priority was yellow perch.
  - 2nd priority was whitefish.

Harbor Beach

Objectives for H.B.

- Evaluate whitefish in Southern Lake Huron
- Harvest whitefish while minimizing bycatch
- Develop and evaluate acceptable fishing grounds.
- Evaluate the collection and posting net locations online.
- Evaluate the potential long term sustainability and profitability in southern Lake Huron.

Harbor Beach

Choosing a S.B. Fisher

The fisher capable and willing to give up the most licenses and gear possible in S.B.

AND

The fisher responsible for the most yellow perch (1) and whitefish (2) harvest in S.B.

Harbor Beach

Choosing a S.B. Fisher: Lic & Gear

S.B. Licenses & Gear

- 20 licenses
- 292 trap nets
- 2 pound nets
- 146,100 ft gill net
- 28,625 ft seine
- 10,700 set hooks

Single Largest lic Holder

- 4 licenses (20%)
- 86 trap nets (29%)
- 2 pound nets (100%)
- 15,600 ft gill net (11%)
- 4,580 ft of seine (16%)
- 750 set hooks (7%)

Harbor Beach

Choosing a S.B. Fisher: Harvest

- The single largest license holder was also responsible for the largest proportion of the harvest:
  - 54% of the yellow perch harvest in 2013
  - 46% of the yellow perch harvest in 2014
  - 54% of the whitefish harvest in 2013
  - 47% of the whitefish harvest in 2014

Harbor Beach

Choosing a S.B. Fisher

- Therefore, one S.B. license holder was in a position to remove
  - 20% of the licenses
  - 29% of the traps nets
  - Reduce annual perch harvest by 50%.

- If interested, this fisher was the best choice to meet the DNR's objectives.

  (He was interested)

Harbor Beach
Study Design

- Three year design evaluating:
  - Southern whitefish stocks
  - Harvest and profit potential
  - Bycatch and bykill
  - Fishing grounds
  - Social acceptability
- The study requires a gradual reduction in the use of Saginaw Bay licenses, gear, and access to yellow perch.

Harbor Beach

Study Design

- A decision on permanent licensing at Harbor Beach will be made in year 4.
- If licensed, the fisher will permanently retire all licenses and gear currently owned and operated in Saginaw Bay.

Harbor Beach

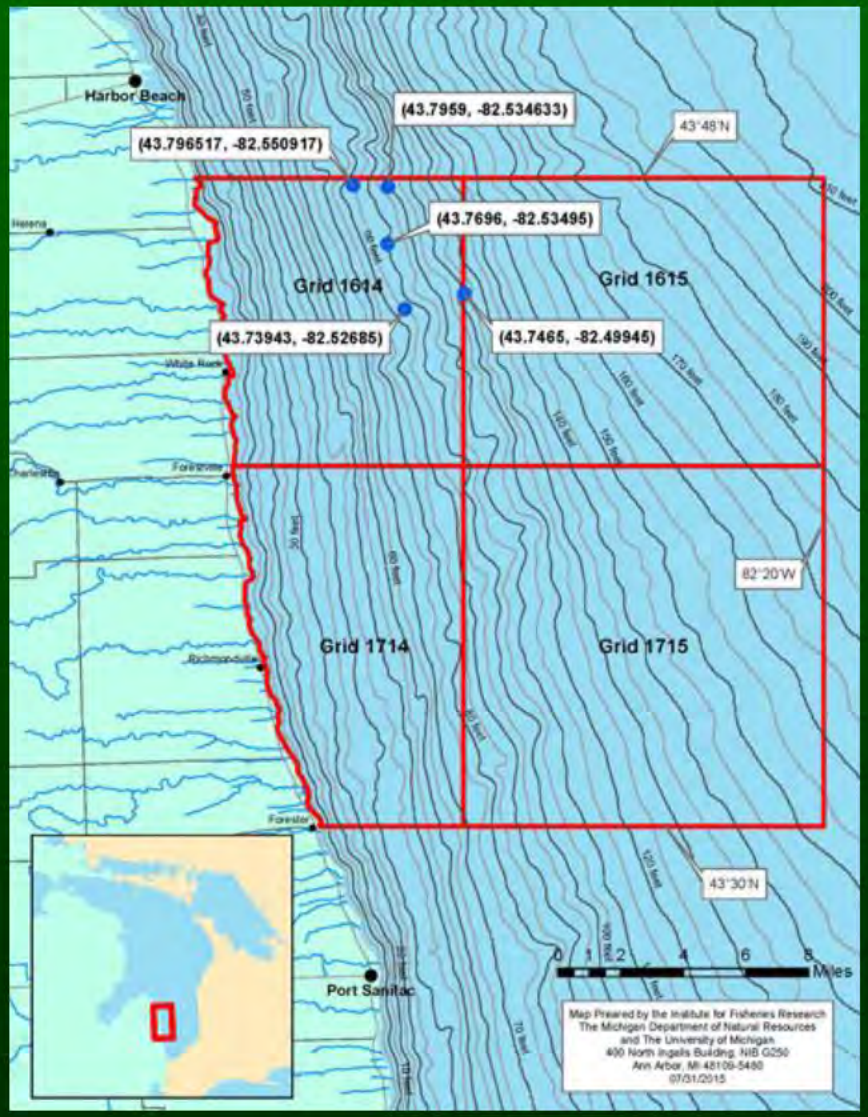
2015: Fishing Grounds

A total of 10 large mesh trap nets may be set from:

Approximately 2 miles south of harbor Beach

to

Approximately 4 miles north of Port Sanilac



Harbor Beach

2015 Harvest

- 3 nets set June 8th
- 4th was set June 16th
- 5th was set July 22nd

- 98,914 pounds of Whitefish.

Harbor Beach
2015 Monitoring

- DNR staff was on the vessel 3 times.
  - June, August, and October

Harbor Beach

2015 Monitoring

- Age and growth data: 200 whitefish

Harbor Beach

2015 Monitoring

- Harvest and bycatch
  - 89.3% Whitefish >17 inches
  - 2.0% Whitefish <17 inches
  - 8.4% Lake Trout
    (<2.5% mortality)
  - < ¼ % Walleye

A few burbot, carp, and sheepshead

Harbor Beach

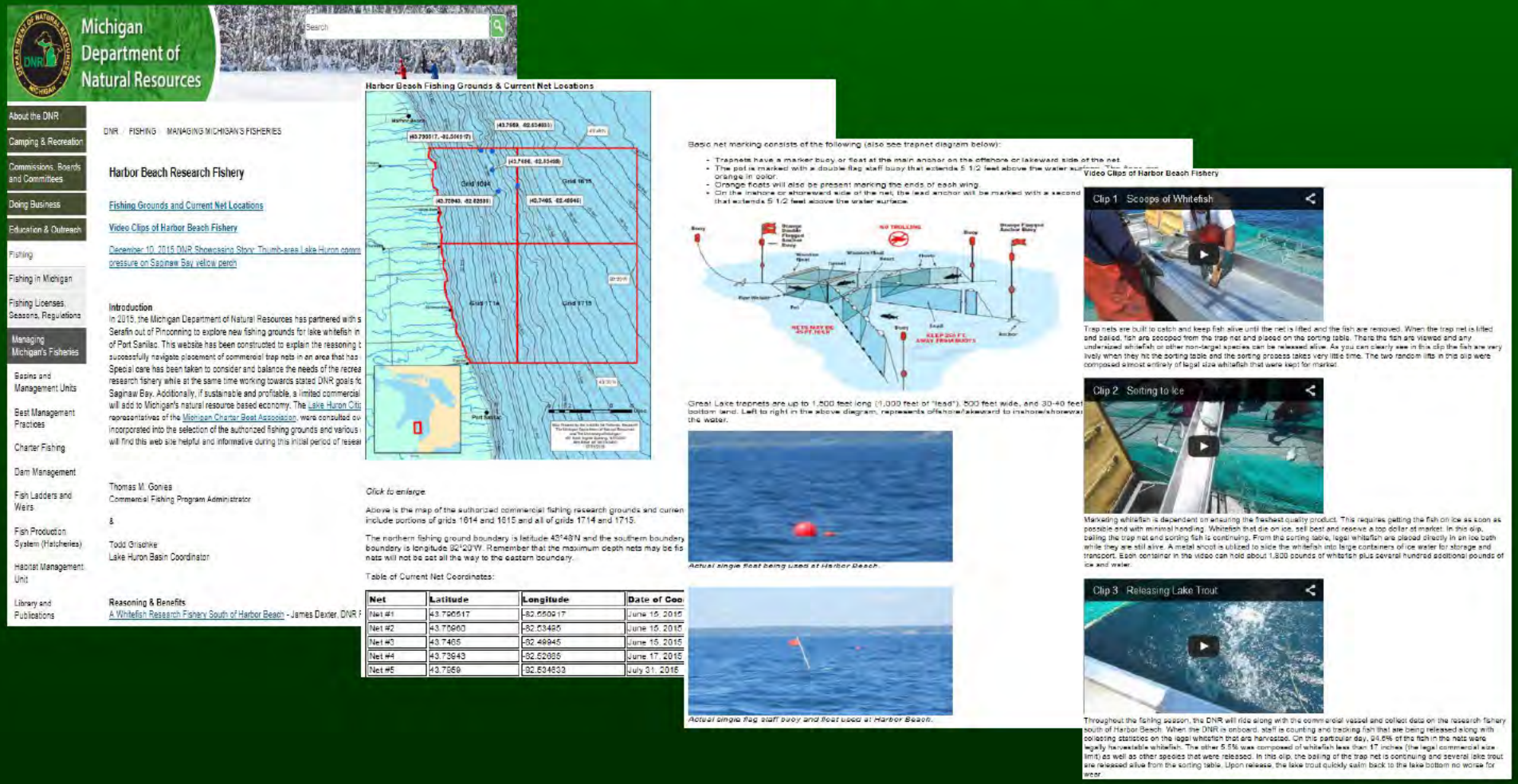
2015 Outreach

- Prior to permitting
  - L.H. Citizen Advisory Committee
  - Thumb Area Steelheaders
- Several Press Releases
  - Resulted in several stories in area papers.

Harbor Beach

2015 Outreach

- DNR Web Site Launched - June



Harbor Beach

2015 Outreach

- DNR Web Site
  - Description of the goal and objectives
  - Map and description of the fishing grounds
  - Individual net locations
  - Description and picture of trap net markings
  - Pictures of the operation and its buoys
  - Videos of bailing, sorting, and icing fish

*Visited 155 times in 2015.

Harbor Beach

2015 Outreach

- DNR Showcasing Story - December

Michigan Department of Natural Resources

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Thumb-area Lake Huron commercial fishing experiment may reduce pressure on Saginaw Bay yellow perch

Dec. 10, 2015

An experimental commercial whitefish venture — operating out of Harbor Beach in Huron County and farther south than similar Lake Huron commercial enterprises — is not only paying dividends for the fisherman involved, it's designed to benefit Michigan's sport fishing anglers as well.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources worked out an agreement with longtime commercial fisherman Dana Serafin, who has fished for perch commercially off Oscoda and in Saginaw Bay for more than two decades.

"This is a three-year evaluation and 2015 was the first year," said fisheries biologist Tom Goniea, who oversees commercial fishing licensing and regulation for the DNR. "The evaluation will continue in 2016 and 2017, at which point the DNR and the commercial fisher decide together whether this is a viable fishing option going forward."

Yellow perch are considered one of the most important and most sought-after species in Lake Huron, especially in Saginaw Bay.

However, the bay's yellow perch population has fallen in recent years as walleye have boomed. With the crash of the Lake Huron alewife population in the mid-2000s, walleye have turned to yellow perch as their main food source.

Todd Grischke, the DNR's Lake Huron Basin coordinator, said angler hours on Lake Huron over the past 20 years mirror the decline in the abundance of yellow perch.

"While the walleye population explosion is viewed by fisheries managers as a success story, one of the undesirable results is an imbalance in the predator-prey ratio in Saginaw Bay," Grischke said.

The DNR's most recent surveys show simultaneously the highest walleye population and the lowest recorded forage base biomass (abundance of food supply) in the past 25 years.

"As a result, yellow perch are now considered the primary forage of most predators in the system including cormorants, northern pike and especially walleye," Grischke said.

Harbor Beach

2015 Reaction

- Several other S.B. fishers.
  - No 2 operations could match the gear.
  - No 3 operations could match the harvest.
  - Dexter committed to considering options.
- Some grumbling from recreational groups (Port Sanilac).
- One comment about ship wrecks.
- Permittee is encouraged by 1st year.

Harbor Beach
2016

- The permit will again be issued in 2016.

Harbor Beach
2016

- DNR will continue
  - Monitoring catch and bycatch
  - Assess Southern Lake Huron whitefish
  - Outreach Efforts
    - Net Locations
    - Press Releases
    - Public discussions as necessary

Harbor Beach
2016

- The permittee will
  - Continue fishing at Harbor Beach
  - Reduce the amount of gear fished in S.B.
  - Only harvest S.B. perch after July 1st.

Law Enforcement Annual Report