

## **Management Plan for Muskellunge in Michigan**

**Kregg Smith**

*Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Plainwell Operations Service Center,  
621 N. 10th Street, Plainwell, Michigan 49080*

**Michael Thomas**

*Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Lake St. Clair Fisheries Research Station,  
33135 South River Road, Mt. Clemens, Michigan 48045*

**Patrick A. Hanchin**

*Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Charlevoix Fisheries Research Station,  
96 Grant Street, Charlevoix, Michigan 49720*

### **Introduction and Background**

This plan focuses on the ecology and management of Muskellunge (*Esox masquinongy*) from the family Esocidae. Esocidae includes two of the more popular game fishes in the Midwest, the Northern Pike (*Esox lucius*) and Muskellunge, as well as one rarely caught and irregularly distributed esocid, the Grass Pickerel (*Esox americanus*). All three of these species share some biological characteristics, yet have unique features of their ecology that affect fishery management. Of the three species, Muskellunge are the most limited in distribution, but may be the most highly regarded as a “trophy” among all freshwater game fish in North America. The purpose of this document is to review the biology and ecology of Muskellunge and their recreational fisheries, and to use this information to guide Muskellunge management in Michigan.

The State of Michigan recognizes several treaties between the United States government and Tribes residing in Michigan. Tribal governments’ signatory to the 1836 Treaty of Washington and the 1842 Treaty of La Pointe retained hunting, fishing, and gathering rights for Tribal members. Tribal governments are sovereign nations, have their own regulations for fishing matters, and may view the management of Muskellunge differently than the state. This plan does not pertain to Tribal fishing rights under the 1836 and 1842 treaties and only describes the management of Muskellunge for state-licensed anglers.