Management Plan for Northern Pike in Michigan

Kregg M. Smith
Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Plainwell Customer Service Center, 621 N. 10th Street, Plainwell, Michigan 49080

Cory K. Kovacs
Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Newberry Customer Service Center, 5100 M-123, Newberry, Michigan 49868

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

James S. Diana
University of Michigan, School of Natural Resources and Environment, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109-1115

Introduction and Background

This plan focuses on the ecology and management of Northern Pike *Esox lucius* from the family Esocidae. Esocidae includes two of the more popular game fishes in the Midwest, the Northern Pike and Muskellunge *Esox masquinongy*, 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, Northern Pike are by far the most common in terms of both their distribution and their abundance in Michigan. The purpose of this document is to review the biology and ecology of Northern Pike, and then to use this information in understanding the fisheries, recreational management of these fisheries and the potential impact recreational fishing has on those resources.

The State of Michigan recognizes several treaties between the United States government and Tribes residing in Michigan. Tribal governments’ signatory to the 1836 and 1842 treaties 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 Northern Pike differently than the state. This plan does not pertain to Tribal fishing rights under the 1836 and 1842 treaties; however it does describe the management of Northern Pike for state-licensed anglers.