Michigan Department of Natural Resources
Fisheries Report 29, 2018

Values, Opinions, and Behavior of Inland Trout Anglers in Michigan

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Abstract.—The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) conducted the Inland Trout Angler Survey to assess current opinions of Michigan’s inland trout anglers with respect to trout regulations and management priorities, and to characterize behavior, opinions, and practices of a large sample of these anglers. The survey was developed to provide information on these relatively unstudied aspects of Michigan trout anglers for incorporation into the DNR’s first statewide management plan for inland populations of Brook Trout Salvelinus fontinalis, Brown Trout Salmo trutta, Rainbow Trout Oncorhynchus mykiss, Lake Trout Salvelinus namaycush, and splake Salvelinus fontinalis x S. namaycush. The survey was designed to assess the values and opinions of anglers as a whole and to compare members of trout fishing organizations (i.e., Trout Unlimited, International Federation of Fly Fishers, and Anglers of the Au Sable) with non-members. Michigan trout anglers tend to have many years of trout fishing experience and use diverse resources to plan fishing trips. Most Michigan trout anglers fished for trout in streams. When deciding which stream to fish, aesthetic beauty was the most important selection factor, followed by the presence of quality-sized trout and trophy trout. More Michigan trout anglers used artificial flies and/or spinners/artificial lures than live bait when fishing for inland trout in streams. In contrast to streams, most Michigan trout anglers did not fish for trout in inland lakes. Those that fished inland lakes tended to target Rainbow Trout or Brown Trout. In contrast to stream anglers, lake anglers believed the chance to catch Rainbow Trout was more important than the chance to catch other species and equal in importance to aesthetic beauty. Results from harvest-related questions suggested lake anglers were more harvest-oriented than stream anglers. Overall, stream and lake anglers were generally satisfied with the DNR Fisheries Division’s management of trout streams and inland lakes.