

Lake Michigan Citizen's Fishery Advisory Committee Meeting
Minutes
September 22, 2020
Zoom

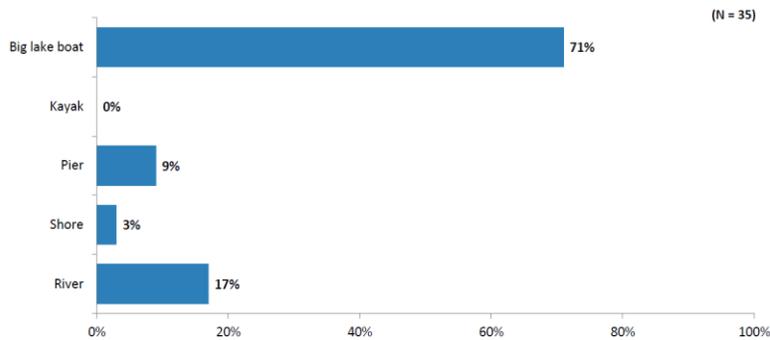
Attendees: Denny Grinold, Jay Wesley, Chuck Pistis, Paul Jensen, Kevin Hughes, Jim Fenner, Martha VanAmberg, Bart Bale, Frank Pearson, Dan O'Keefe, Frank Krist, John Stegmeir, Bill Winowiecki, Dave Clapp, Gary Smith, Sean Kehoe, Troy VanGelderen, Dave Peterson, Wes Newberry, Eric Braden, Larry Atkin, Donna Wesander, Scott Heintzelman, Troy Zorn, Dave Shaw, Jim Bos, Greg Mariuz, Glen Buehner, George Freeman, Jim Bedford, Steve Lenart, Christian LeSage, Todd Grischke, Aaron Switzer, Ed Eisch, Katelyn Brolick, David Staniszewski, Ed Erdelac, John Tonz, Mark Williams, Eric Anderson, and Jim Dexter.

Welcome and Zoom Instructions

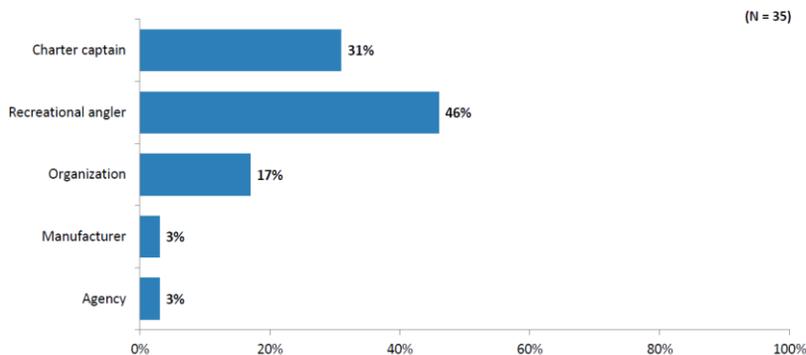
Advisory Committee Survey Review and Discussion

- The Committee discussed the survey results. In general, Lake Trout was good, Coho and Steelhead were fair, and Chinook salmon was poor. See results below:

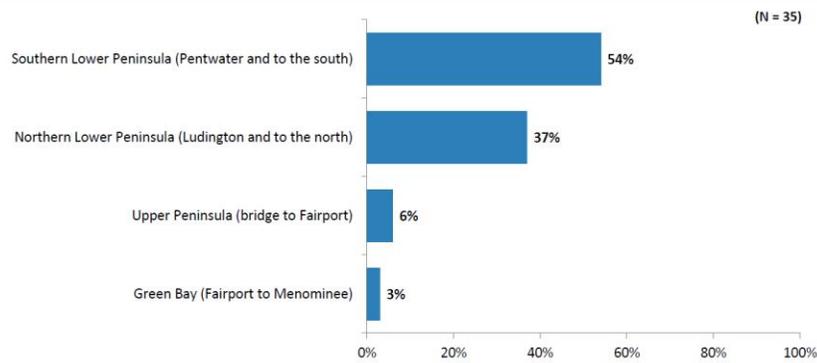
What type of angling do you do the most in the Lake Michigan basin?



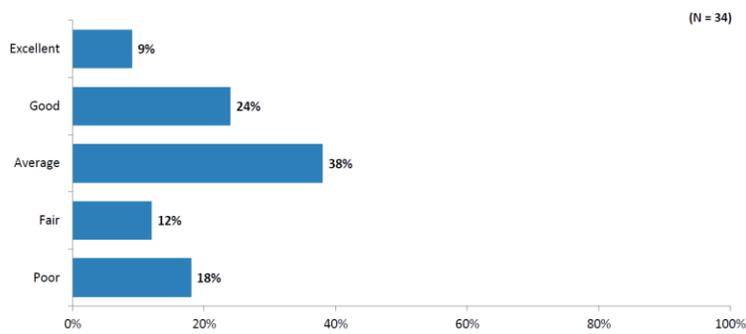
What best describes your interest regarding Lake Michigan angling?



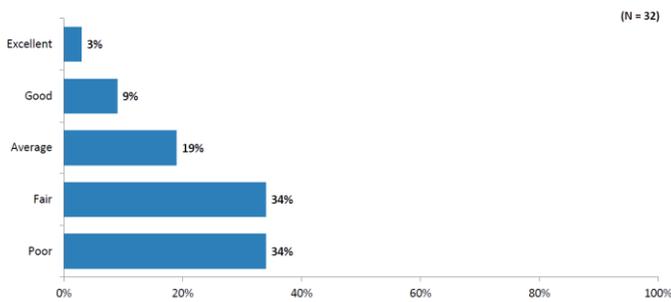
Where did you mostly fish on Lake Michigan in 2020?



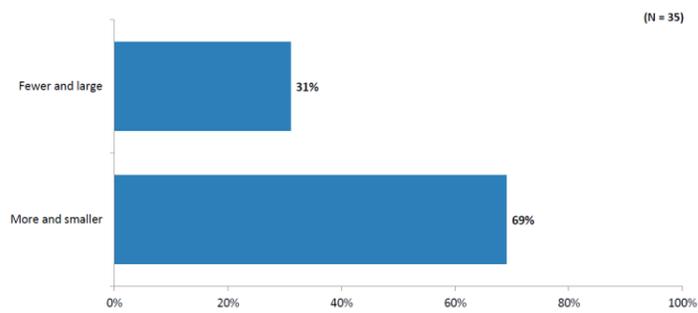
How would you rate your fishing experience overall in 2020?



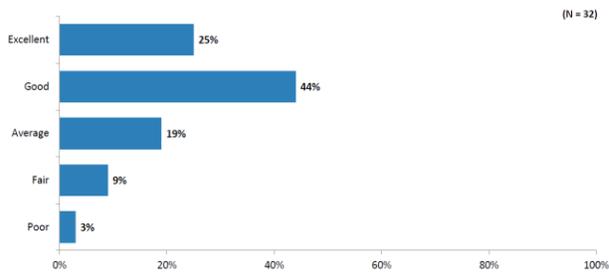
How was Chinook fishing so far in 2020?



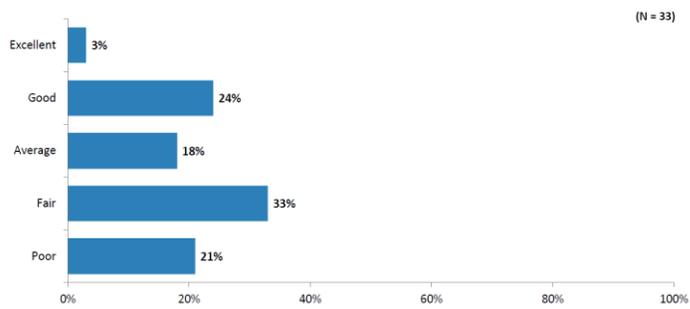
In the future, do you prefer fewer and large Chinook salmon or more and smaller Chinook salmon?



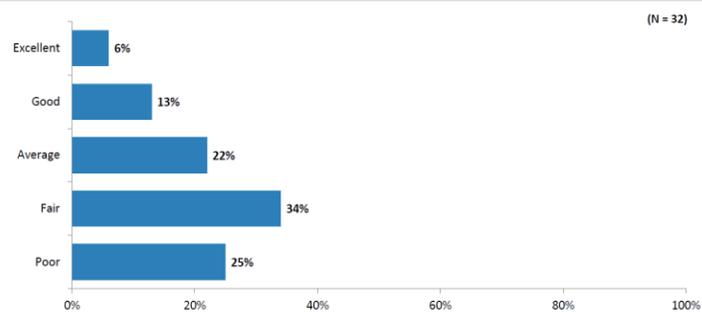
How was lake trout fishing so far in 2020?



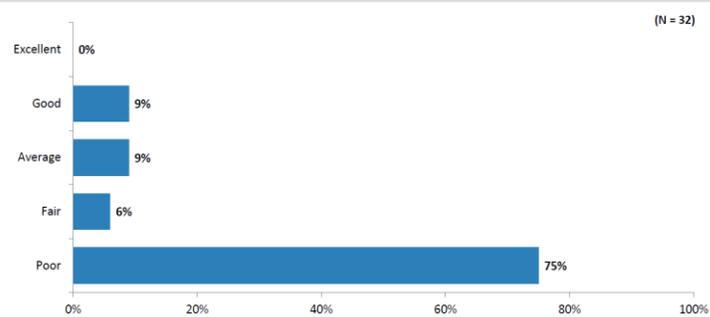
How was steelhead fishing so far in 2020?



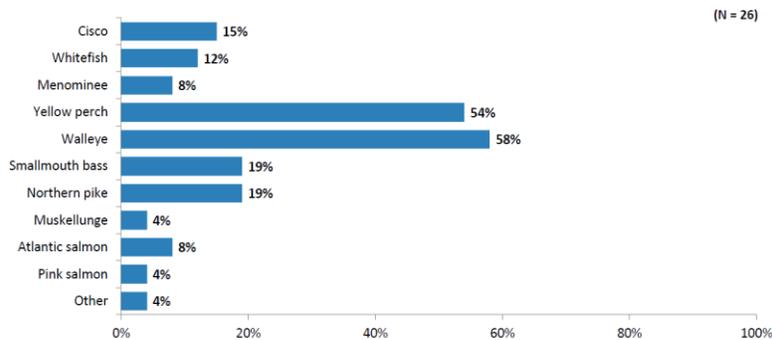
How was coho salmon fishing so far in 2020?



How was brown trout fishing so far in 2020?



Please select other fish that you actively pursued in 2020.



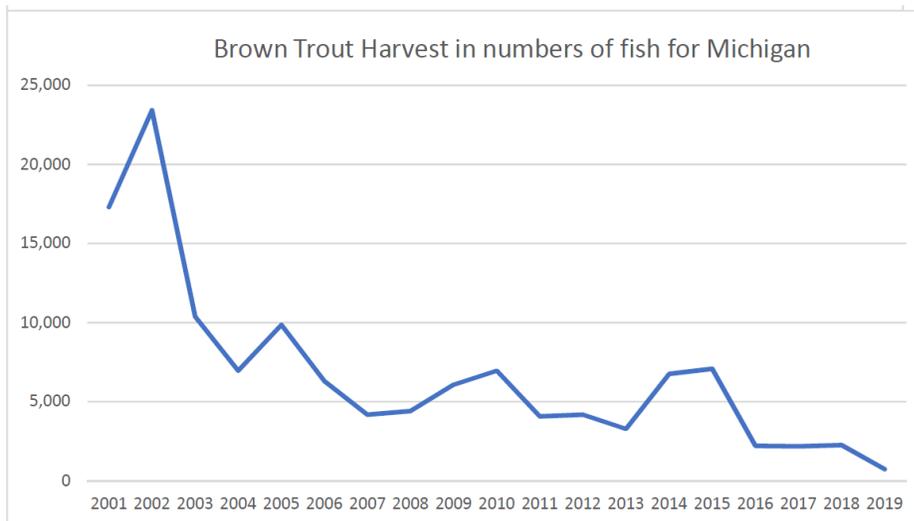
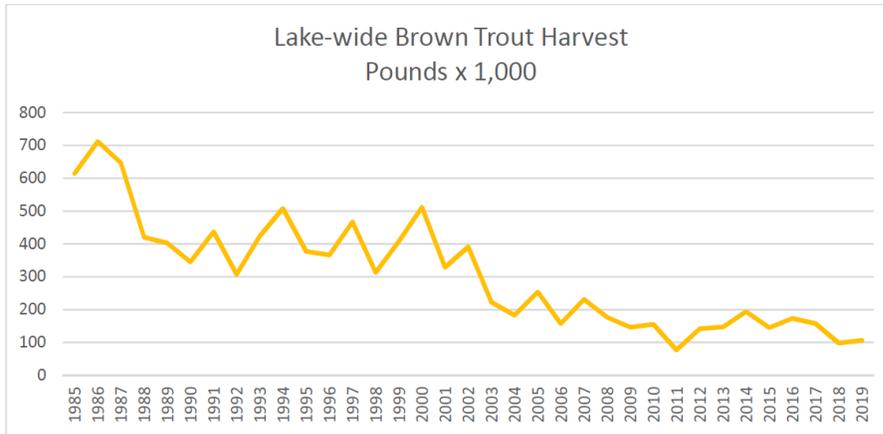
Survey Comments

- Do you think there is a need for a Chinook minimum stocking level? Would high water make a difference?
 - High water could be an issue and/or colder water as smolts are outmigrating. May be too many predators nearshore like lake trout, walleye, drum, smallmouth bass, etc. There may be a minimum number of Chinook that need to be stocked to maintain more stable natural reproduction in certain streams.
- There are no fish in streams up north and the natural reproduction is low. Last two years there has not been many coho. Anglers have only caught a couple in Crystal River. Numbers of salmon are low.
- Will the lack of wild reproduction be a factor in the predator prey discussion when talking about stocking in the future?
 - Yes, both natural and stocked chinook salmon are used to estimate the lake-wide biomass. The model did show lower Chinook salmon biomass and a slight increase in alewife, which puts us in a stocking increase recommendation. Stocking has been increased since 2017, and there are talks to bump up stocking in 2021 and 2022.

Chinook issue statement – Should Chinook salmon be used to mitigate for no steelhead stocking in 2021?

- What are the implications for the future of steelhead stocking?
 - We will do a full egg take in spring of 2021 and get back on track for steelhead stocking. Unable to stock steelhead eggs because of COVID-19. Because of that, there is room in the predator cap. Chinook is easiest as a replacement. 225,000 Chinook to stock in Michigan to replace the lack of steelhead stocking.
- What is going on in other states?
 - Wisconsin was able to have steelhead egg take but did not have enough to share with other states. Indiana will also have less steelhead as they typically trade Skamania strain with Michigan winter strain. Indiana does have Skamania as their egg take took place before COVID restrictions. Michigan will be trading Coho salmon for Skamania.
- What do you mean that these fish may have to go outside the consent decree area?
 - The Consent Decree negotiations may not be completed in time, and we don't want to disrupt that process with a new stocking proposal. Typically, we would provide a stocking proposal for the Consent Decree Technical Fishery Committee to review and approve prior to stocking.

- Once the proposal is approved, staff will recommend where to stock them and will seek the committee's feedback. If there is an opportunity to work the proposal through the tribes in time for stocking, we will do that.
- Not enough by Ludington and Manistee, this would be a step in the right direction. Agree that some of the natural streams and rivers do not seem to have the King salmon returning this fall.
 - We will consider the northern part of the lake such as Little Manistee River, Medusa, and Ludington State Park
- Angler hours north of Leland is lower. The Lake Trout must be shared with the tribes, so that puts more pressure on the fishery. The salmon takes pressure off the Lake Trout fishery. You should put half to the north and half to the south.
- Used to catch lots of kings in June and July. During the Manistee tournament, we always caught many Chinook stocked at Medusa Creek.
- Do we know if Medusa Creek contributes to more natural reproduction?
 - Don't know for certain but they could stray into other streams and help with natural reproduction.
- Platte River stocked coho salmon all go south, so we need something besides lake trout in the north.
- Would it be timely to look at the Little Manistee River to see how the wild smolts are contributing since all fish allowed to go up and spawn?
 - We don't have a outmigration study planned as those are expensive. We can look at future returns to the weir. This year's Little Manistee Survey showed similar amounts of parr as last year indicating that the system is saturated or at capacity similar to past years.
- We may plan our next committee meeting in March, so we have time to talk about stocking sites and numbers.
- The DNR is still stocking brown trout, and no one is catching them. Why not cut those and replace with Chinook?
 - The study was supposed to be completed by 2023. Harvest of brown trout have gone down for all states and all ports in Michigan. There was a decline with alewife then another drastic decline with zebra and quagga mussels. The water is clearer with less phosphorous, and perhaps the water temperature nearshore has increased. Recent tagging data found Wisconsin stocked brown trout being caught in Michigan, so they might migrate more now than what they used to.
 - There is still good return on browns in the Menominee
 - Pier anglers caught some browns in Grand Haven this spring.
 - In Lake Huron, we tried everything and then switched to Atlantic Salmon for brown trout.



The issue statement had committee consensus to move forward with mitigating the lack of steelhead with 225,000 Chinook salmon.

Terms of Reference

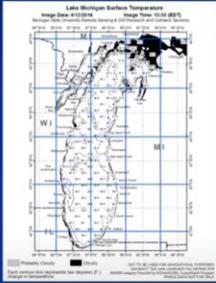
- Major additions from previous discussions includes the vice-chair, nominations, adding/removing members. Also made it more generic so all four Great Lakes Citizens Fishery Advisory Committees would have a similar Terms of Reference.
- Once adopted, we will call for nominations and will have a ballot vote for Chair and Vice-Chair at the next meeting.
- Lake Huron plans to review this at their next meeting.
- We need to consider a transition period. If we have a new Chair, old chair needs to bring the new chair up to speed. Past Chair needs to stay on for a period.
- Chair and vice-chair should serve at the pleasure of the committee, so if things going the wrong way they should be removed.
- Is the election every year? No, every three years to maintain some consistency with only two meetings a year.
- Once other committees agree, our committee will adopt and hold an election. This will be at the spring meeting in March.

Michigan Sea Grant Update

- Lake MI multispecies predator-prey ratio structured decision analysis project with MSU is underway and will be a two-year process. This is a small stakeholder group that will develop objectives, consider unknowns and uncertainties, give input into modeling, and evaluate stocking scenarios that potentially accomplish their objectives.
- Michigan Charter Captain Survey
 - Surveyed Michigan Charter Captains- March survey MCBA association membership, coast watch.
 - Surveyed those who had completed March survey asking COVID impacts. Cares act did not include money for GL fisheries, but did include marine fisheries. Going to follow up again and assess the impact of COVID to the entire season.
 - 2019 CoastWatch Impacts

Charter Economics

- 2019 CoastWatch Impacts
 - Over 100,000 gallons of gas saved
 - Over \$481,000 saved
 - 86% of captains in areas with coverage saved money and gas with CoastWatch



	Active Captains	Benefiting Captains	Gallons Saved/Capt	Dollars Saved/Capt	Gallons Saved	Dollars Saved
COVERAGE	484	391	227	\$ 1,067	88,723	\$ 416,894
NO COVERAGE	109	65	89	\$ 949	11,053	\$ 63,349
					CHARTER FISH TOTAL	\$ 480,243
					NOONR, NONFISH	\$ 1,500
					TOTAL	\$ 481,743

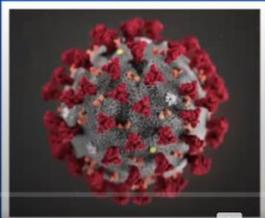
50% Response Rate!

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- 2020 COVID Impacts May-June
 - Early in the pandemic, it was not clear what the Executive Orders met so some boats did not go out.

Charter Economics

- 2020 COVID-19 Impacts, May-June
 - 32% had not taken a single trip
 - 75% reported late season bookings down
 - Average captain lost 15 trips May-June
 - \$4.5 M total revenue lost



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- Info for Michigan River Steelhead Project is on Great Lakes Angler Diary resource page <https://bit.ly/35U27yT>
 - The new iOS app will be useable offline when you are on the river. There is quick tutorial on website.
 - Looking to build volunteer teams, target 20 volunteer per team by fall 2020 and need team leaders to promote. Still need team leaders for Betsie, Manistee, Muskegon, and St. Joe.

GREAT LAKES ANGLER DIARY

RESOURCE PAGE

Record your catches with Great Lakes Angler Diary and help biologists learn how stocked and wild fish contribute to the Great Lakes and their tributary streams.

Michigan River Steelhead Program

Did you ever wonder if steelhead in your favorite river are mostly stocked or mostly wild?

Now you can contribute catch info to Michigan Sea Grant to help us find out. All you need to do is:

- REGISTER at GLanglerdiary.org or download the IOS app
- RECORD every river steelhead trip taken October-May
- MEASURE each and every steelhead caught
- CHECK for fin clips and other marks

At the end of the season you will be asked to take a short survey and verify.

Big Lake Salmon and Steelhead Program

This program replaces the Salmon Ambassadors program, which enlisted anglers to collect data on over 30,000 stocked and wild Chinook salmon from 2013-2020. Many stocked Chinook salmon present in the Great Lakes are still marked with an adipose fin clip, but those from the 2020 year-class were not marked.

Although interpretation of fin clips is no longer as straightforward as it once was, we still welcome big lake data for all salmon and trout species, with special emphasis on steelhead and Chinook salmon. To participate:

- REGISTER at GLanglerdiary.org or download the IOS app
- RECORD every big lake fishing trip taken May-September
- MEASURE each and every steelhead and Chinook salmon caught
- CHECK for fin clips and other marks

Printed data sheets will no longer be accepted by mail, but you can print the

Steelhead Journal Program

- River Team leaders needed for:
 - Betsie
 - Manistee
 - Pere Marquette
 - Muskegon
 - Grand
 - St. Joseph
- Target 20 volunteers per team by Fall 2020
- Now looking for team leaders willing to promote program and collect data Fall 2020 – Spring 2025

- Interpreting Fin Clips- Fin Clip article <https://bit.ly/33TXna>
 - Some have additional marks: Manistee Skamania ADRV some WI Ganaraska also ADRV IN Skamania with AD only. Some fall fingerlings may not have fin clip.
 - Michigan is marking fall fingerlings Manistee and Joe Rivers.
 - Some steelhead may have an AD only clip and no tag

- Thank you, Sea Grant. Agencies receive decent data from Lake Michigan through creel and headhunters but do not typically receive much from our rivers. This program should really help.

Interpreting Fin Clips

<https://bit.ly/33TXnaa>

- 90% of run is lake age 2-3
- Stocking of mass-marked steelhead began in 2018
- All spring yearlings since 2018 have AD & CWT
- Some have add'l marks:
Manistee Skamania ADRV
Some WI Ganaraska also ADRV
IN Skamania with AD only

DNR Updates

- **Field:** Pumps on tomorrow at the Little Manistee Weir. About 300 fish below right now. We will have a much better idea of what is going on at the start of next week and will try and do an early egg take. Weir facilities are not open to the public or school groups this year. Once we are given the okay to do field work, we got out to do stream and discretionary survey work.
- **Hatcheries:** Construction at Thompson Hatchery is going well now with drier conditions. The ponds are really moving along, all harvest kettles are completed. Starting on lining the ponds this week. Plan is to be in operation by spring 2021 rearing walleye and muskies. Coho numbers at Platte should be good with about 10,000-15,000 fish in system. Low chinook runs in area rivers is drawing more angler pressure to the lower Platte. We are trying to accommodate salmon in the classroom program either virtually or with fish. Fish health results for arctic grayling broodstock tested clean, so those fish were moved from isolation to Marquette Hatchery.
- **Research:** Vessel program did not get out until July, so missed big gill netting survey in the spring. We were able to do trawling at perch index ports within the last month. Fair to poor year class for perch and reasonable numbers of alewives and young Chinook salmon were collected. Collections for EPA fish contaminants sampling happened in the last month. Smallmouth bass study was not done this year, as well as lake wide acoustic, and near shore forage fish. Looking at alternate methods to assess forage like age 3 fish weight at weir. USGS is doing a limited bottom trawl survey at Port Washington, Saugatuck, and Waukegan. Charter info for early part spring is very limited for SE MI walleye fishery and SW MI coho fishery. Smaller boats have had more issues than the larger boats, due to not understanding the COVID constraints. While some have been able to run, some chose not to for personal reasons. Some captains did phenomenal and got a lot of interest from public because of other festival cancelations. In Bays De Noc we did not jaw tag walleyes. Managed to get manuscript published about nearshore waters lower zooplankton concentrations. Interested in looking at how higher water levels correlate with zooplankton levels. Fall assessment work is on schedule.

- Law Enforcement: GL enforcement unit was expanded with additions to Pentwater, Marquette, and Southeast MI. Delayed getting boats in the water. Unit is focusing on upgrading response to fish net entanglements. We have a mapping program where net entanglements are being identified. Betsie River closure from 100 to 300 ft appears to be effective. However, jet boats are making their way up the river and causing major bank erosion. A tribal fisher recovered a lost net from 6 years ago near Ludington. The pot was closed so it was not fishing. There was some gear in the net, and the Ludington Charter Boat Association has pictures of the gear if interested. The fisher has been in close contact with the charter boat association. Please submit coordinates for any unmarked or abandoned nets.
 - Complaint about river guides working illegally in PM Lake. PM Lake is navigable water so these guides would need a Merchant Mariners License.
- Fisheries Chief: The monthly updates were sent to the committee for more details. Staff are doing a great job in these tough conditions. It took several months to get field work approval for the Office of State Employer. Office work is still not allowed and may not be until next year. We do not have a fiscal year 2021 budget yet. Fiscal year 2022 could be a billion in the hole for the state. We are not sure of the impact to Fisheries Division or the DNR currently. Tribal negotiations have been slow. Commercial fishing bills are still in committee, and Senator McBroom has been holding hearings. The bill is running out of time for action.

Thank you, Katelyn, for helping with the Zoom Meeting.

Adjourn