

Northern Lake Huron Management Unit



FISHERIES DIVISION
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES

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What is the NLHMU?

The Northern Lake Huron Management Unit (NLHMU) encompasses all of the waters that make up the watersheds that drain into the northern portion of Lake Huron, from Sault Ste. Marie south to Oscoda. Our unit includes all or portions of the following counties: Chippewa, Mackinac, Cheboygan, Emmet, Presque Isle, Charlevoix, Cheboygan, Otsego, Montmorency, Alpena, Alcona, Oscoda, Crawford, Roscommon, Ogemaw, and Iosco counties. Fisheries staff working in this unit cover a diverse array of inland waters and Lake Huron ports. This diversity includes famous trout rivers, a large number of small inland lakes, some of Michigan's largest inland lakes, popular waters where lake sturgeon roam, and key Lake Huron fishing ports. All staff are housed at the Gaylord Customer Service Center except for fisheries assistants who are in charge of capturing angler catch statistics at various Lake Huron ports. This newsletter provides a snapshot of activities that our management unit conducted in 2015 and other useful information.

Investing in our Future

We urge our anglers to get proactive with kids in the outdoors. For most of us, the appreciation and respect for the outdoors arose when we were young and fostered by others. There are many kids out there who do not have the opportunity to spend time in the outdoors, and we should all take it upon ourselves to bring youth (and anyone else) to our rivers and lakes. The time you invest in youth activities in the outdoors will pay handsome dividends. In today's electronic world, some kids have no idea what they are missing out of doors. Others do know what they are missing, and are unable to get there. Ask yourself, are you doing enough for our future outdoor managers?



Did you know?

Bass fishing is a popular activity in the Midwest and southern states, and rapidly getting more attention in Michigan. Some of the best bass lakes in Michigan are located in northeast Michigan and include Fletcher Floodwaters, Long , Grand, and Hubbard lakes near Alpena, as well as Mullett and Burt Lakes. Though invasives, round gobies and rusty crayfish are present in most of these lakes, bass are utilizing them as a forage source.



State Record Smallmouth Bass

The state record smallmouth bass was caught in our management unit this fall, in Hubbard Lake Alcona County. It weighed 9.33 pounds and was caught by Gregory Gasciel while bait casting with a green grub. It eclipsed the old record of 9.25 pounds set way back in 1906. Ironically, the old record was from our unit as well. This is a prize fish and distinguished record to hold. We believe Mr. Gasciel will be receiving some phone calls from nationwide media, especially BASS nation.



The Michigan DNR recognizes 51 current state records for fish. You can find these in the Michigan Fishing Guide. Who knows, maybe its your turn next to catch a state record?

Stocking and Management

Walleye Stocking 2015

From our **James Farm Pond** near Hillman we raised nearly 249,000 fingerling walleye and stocked the following lakes with 1.5" fish: EastTwin Lake 69,780, McCollum Lake 19,740, Tea Lake 12,222, Vaughn Lake 9,357, Alcona Pond 27,537, Big Lake 11,646, Beaver Lake 38,690, Long Lake Cheboygan County 19,530, Long Lake Montmorency County 15,072. Crooked Lake Montmorency County 15,284, and Ess Lake 10,045.

From our **Reid-Berney Pond** near Alanson we raised 30,420 fingerling walleye and stocked 1.5" fish in these waters: Tea Lake 6,300, Ocqueoc Lake 11,250, and Kleber Pond 12,870.



The St. Marys River system received 321,255 spring fingerling walleye spread throughout the river system as produced in the cooperative **eastern UP walleye ponds** with assistance from CORA, DNR, and the Drummond Island Sportsman's Club.

The following lakes were stocked with 2.1" fingerling walleye from the **Bay City rearing ponds**: Cooke Pond 121,522, and Au Sable Lake 31,828.

Stocking and Management

Inland Trout Stocking 2015

Our fisheries unit annually stocks trout into various inland lakes and streams in our management area. We rarely stock into waters that have healthy wild populations of trout. Stocking efforts enhance low numbers of wild trout, or stocking efforts are made where trout will survive but are unable to sustain themselves through natural reproduction. We evaluate survival of such stocking efforts through fall gill netting and electrofishing surveys. However, angler reports are essential to our management decisions and anglers can assist us by telling us what they are catching, or not catching.....

The following unit inland waterbodies were stocked with trout in 2015:

BROWN TROUT

Lakes: Avalon, Fifteen, Ford, McCormick, O'Brien, Weber

Rivers: Au Sable, Carp, Thunder Bay



RAINBOW TROUT

Lakes: Bear Den, Big Chub, Bridge, Bright, Crater, Dukes, Heart, Loon, O'Brien, Pickerel, Reid, Silver, South Hoist, Trout Creek Pond, West Lost

Rivers: Au Sable

BROOK TROUT

Lakes: Hemlock, Section Four, Lost, South and North Twin

SPLAKE

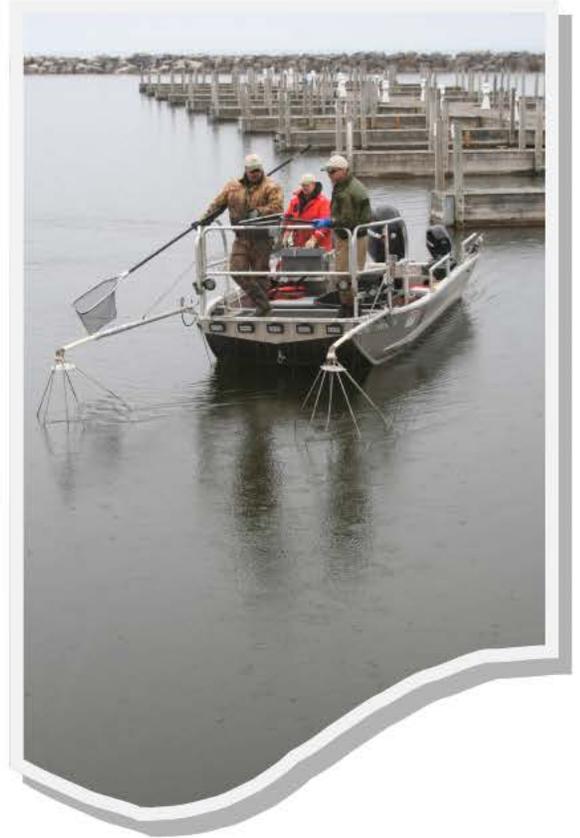
Lakes: Avalon, Clear, Thumb



Gear Spotlight

Electrofishing Boat

Fisheries Division uses a variety of gear types to collect fish. Some are passive techniques, some are active survey techniques. Passive gear types (such as gill nets) use time and allow for fish to come to the net. With active gear types we pursue the fish on our own time. Our boomshocking boat is an example of an active gear type. The boat in the picture is specialized and took many months to develop. They are a standard gear type for all fisheries units in Michigan. A generator on board is connected to a special electrical conversion box which converts AC power to DC power. The current is run through electrical lines onto the front of the boat and the drop boxes seen project it out into the water. The bottom of the boat acts as the ground. A common misconception is that electrofishing shocks everything in the water. This is false. We are limited to electrofishing the shallow (2-6 feet) water of lakes or rivers in a path as wide as the boat, or slightly larger. Another misconception is that it kills the fish. This is also false. We have defined the proper settings (amps, current, volts) to our boat and only stun the fish, allowing enough time to net the specimen and place on board the boat in a collection tank. A third misconception is that we only shock fish at night so as to be secretive from the public. Also false. Rivers are shocked in the day since they are much more dangerous to shock



at night. Lake shorelines are surveyed with this gear type at night since fish become more vulnerable in the shallow water in the dark hours, particularly walleye. During nighttime surveys, the water is lit up with flood lights for viewing and collection purposes. Fish react to the electrical field differently. Some fish are very vulnerable to the field (bass, suckers, walleye), others are sensitive and shy of the field (northern pike, muskellunge). That is why we use a variety of gear types when surveying all fish species in a lake.



Dams: Should they stay or should they go?

You will find today that dams are coming out from the Michigan landscape. The push is also nationwide, with funding much more prevalent for dam removal.



Dam removal is the focus of Fisheries Division much more than dam renovation; however, there are certain instances where the fishing and recreational opportunity provided by a flooded lake or pond is high. In our unit, we look at such structures on a case by case basis. This is highlighted by recently completed efforts to remove a dam in the Pigeon River watershed, and renovate a control structure in the Black River watershed. As of October 2015, the Pigeon River will no longer be scarred by the impact of the Song of the Morning Dam in Otsego County. The dam has been removed, and the river is free flowing again for the first time in a century. Water temperatures have been lowered downstream, and fish passage is restored. In Montmorency County, we worked to rebuild the Foch Lake Flooding control structure on Townline Creek. This flooding provides bass, bluegill, and pike fishing opportunity and is used by campers and hunters as well. Both projects were heavily funded by DNR grants as well as other local sources. We will continue to examine the pros and cons of such structures on our waterbodies which will enable us to make proper decisions on whether a dam should stay or go.

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Angler Photo Center

Lake Avalon, lake trout



Lake Huron, lake trout



Mullett Lake, diversity

Misery Bay, Atlantic salmon



West Town Corner Lake, bass



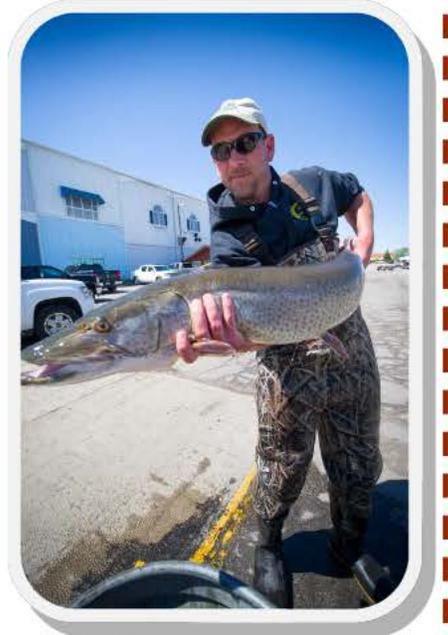
Hubbard Lake, walleye



Miscellaneous

Statewide Muskellunge Egg Take

Our fisheries region has both native and stocked muskellunge populations. Locations that we stock every other or third year include Lake's Besser and Winyah in Alpena County. Otsego Lake, Otsego County, and Cooke Dam Pond, Iosco County. Muskellunge are raised extensively from eggs and milt stripped from wild fish in the Detroit River corridor. These are Great Lakes, or spotted strain muskellunge. The egg take event occurs over approximately three weeks each May, and statewide fisheries personnel assist in the effort. Such effort includes our unit technician crew in most years. Fertilized eggs are incubated at Wolf Lake Hatchery near Kalamazoo, and after their yolk sacs are absorbed, they are placed in special outside rearing ponds to feed on zooplankton. Young fingerling muskellunge are eventually fed small minnow forage and they are stocked at fall fingerling stage which is near 8 inches. Supply is limited, while demand is high statewide. Muskellunge provide a unique angling experience and 50 inch fish are caught in our unit each year. Best fishing locations include Black Lake, Lower Black River, Cheboygan River, St. Marys River, and Otsego Lake.



Personnel Spotlight — Neal Godby

Neal Godby is a senior fisheries biologist within the Northern Lake Huron Management Unit. He grew up in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan and attended Sault High School. He received both his B.S. and M.S. degree from the University of Michigan, in 1994 and 2000, respectively. He worked for the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality from 2000-2002 and has worked as a biologist with the DNR since 2002. He enjoys fishing, camping, cross country skiing, and curling. As a sports fan he likes hockey and cheers on his Michigan Wolverine football team.



Project Spotlight - Twin Lakes Walleye Estimate

Evaluating stocking efforts is an important aspect of fish management. Fish are not cheap to raise, nor is stocking appropriate for all waterbodies, regardless of whether it is trout, walleye, or muskellunge. We stock East and West Twin Lake in Montmorency

County with walleye every other year, and have done so for decades. These efforts provide a popular inland walleye fishery based on angler reports. On occasion, however, we measure the density and health of the walleye population directly. We accomplished this at both lakes at ice-out in the

spring of 2015. We used trap netting and near-shore electrofishing efforts to capture fish over a two week period. Methods included tagging each fish with a jaw tag, and releasing them to be captured again by either survey crews again, or by anglers.

Catches suggested a healthy population or density in both lake. Growth rates (by aging fish with bony structures) will be determined later in the winter. Anglers reported catching many jaw tagged walleye over the summer, which is music to our ears. Data

also suggest that the Twin Lakes walleye population continues to be reliant on stocking efforts, and not natural reproduction. We will continue evaluating unit walleye populations in coming years and have a Hubbard Lake (Alcona County) estimate scheduled for spring 2017.



Field Photos

Lake Avalon, splake



Education event on W Br Sturgeon Rv



Lake Besser, muskellunge



Habitat assessment W Br Big Creek



Education event Montmorency County

2015 Lake & Stream Surveys, field work

During the spring and early summer our unit conducts fish community surveys on lakes when temperatures reach 55-75 degrees Fahrenheit. Our stream fish surveys are mostly done from July through early September. A variety of gear types are used on lakes while direct current electrofishing is primarily used on rivers and smaller creeks. Some surveys are general examinations of the fish community, while others are directed towards a specific species. Here is where we focused our efforts in 2015.

- Black Lake sturgeon fishing season
- Rogers City harbor, Hammond Bay harbor, Presque Isle harbor, salmonid assessments
- East and West Twin Lakes walleye population estimates
- Big Bear Lake muskellunge stocking evaluation
- Little Wolf Lake, Lake Besser, Rush Lake, Burt Lake fish community assessments
- Devils, Black River (Alcona and Montmorency Co), Pigeon River water temperature monitoring
- Walleye pond culture
- Ocqueoc Rv, Gauthier Ck, Berlinski Ck, Butternut Ck, DeRocher Ck, Rainy Rv, Black Rv, West Br Big Ck, Gimlet Ck, stream fish community surveys
- Sturgeon Rv, South Branch Au Sable (2 sites), Au Sable River, Pigeon Rv, trout population estimates
- Tea Lake, Beaver Lake, Hubbard Lake, Long Lake (Montmorency Co), East Twin Lake, St. Marys River, fall juvenile walleye assessments
- Swan River salmon weir operation
- Lake Avalon, Kneff Lake, Twin Lake #1, trout stocking evaluations



2016 Scheduled Surveys

Spring Fish Community Surveys:

-Five Channels Basin, Iosco Co.; Sportsman's Pond, Presque Isle Co.

-Voyer Lake, Montmorency Co.

Yellow perch Index Netting: - Mullett Lake, Cheboygan Co.

Stream Fish Community Survey: Taylor Ck, Biscuit Ck, Pickerel Ck, Roy Ck, McDonald Ck, Kurtz Ck, Wallace Ck, Rapson Ck, Hannah Ck, Little Munuscong Rv, E Br Pine Rv

Trout Population Estimate: Pigeon Rv, South Br Au Sable Rv, Au Sable Rv, North -Br. Carp Rv

Water Temperature Monitoring: Pine Rv watershed, Pigeon River, Black Rv watershed

Fall Juvenile Walleye Index: Black Lake, Mullett Lake, Lake St. Helen, Van Etten Lake, St. Marys River in multiple locations

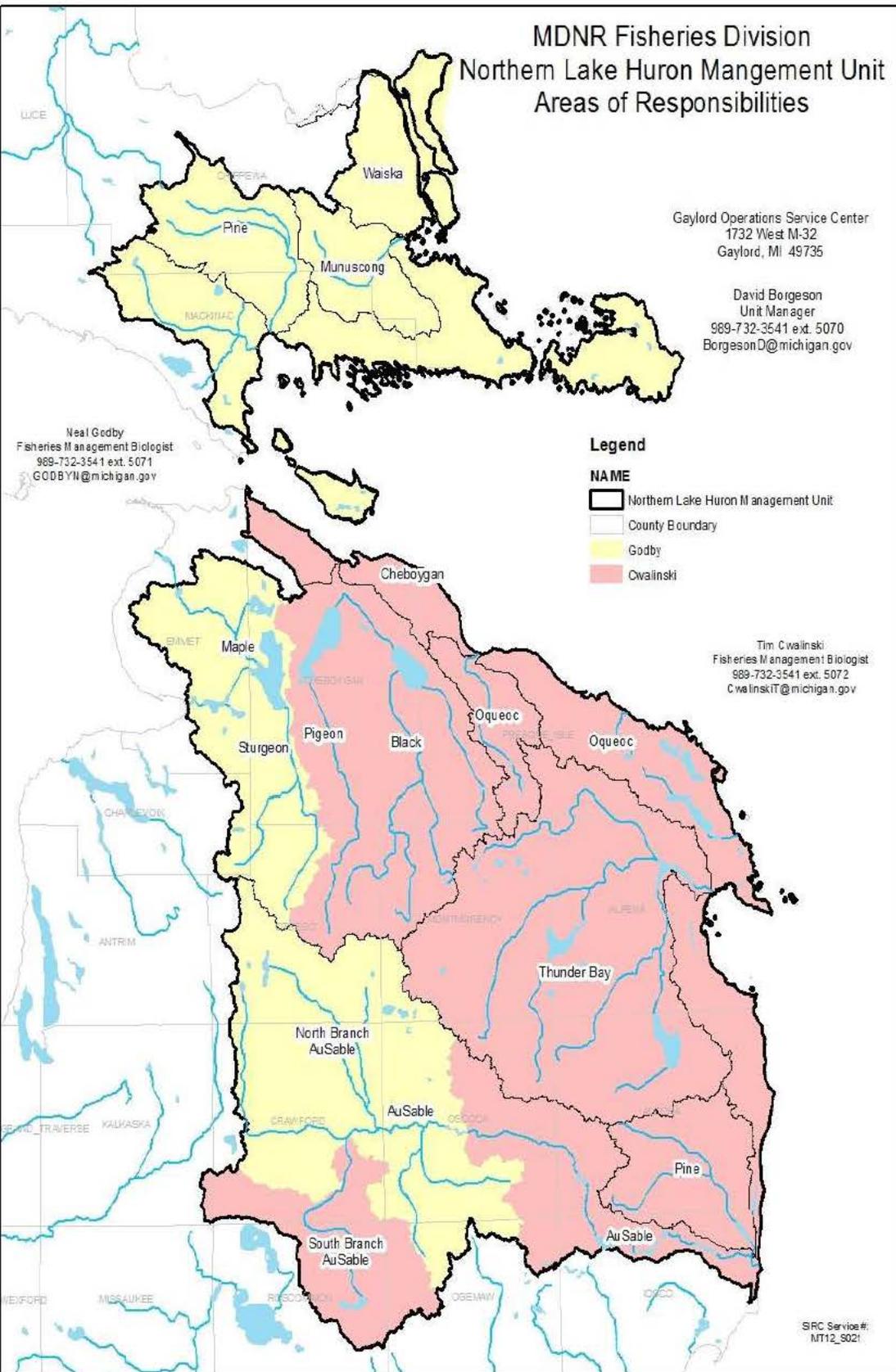
Fall Trout Stocking Evaluation: Reid Lake, South Hoist Lake, O'Brien Lake

Angler Census: Mullett Lake



Contact us at any time

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