

# Northern Lake Huron Management Unit



ISSUE 1

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**Neal Godby, Senior Fisheries Biologist**

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**Linda Schroeder, Fisheries Assistant (St. Ignace/Detour)**

**Ed Higgins, Fisheries Assistant (Harrisville/Oscoda)**

**Julie Shafto, Fisheries Assistant (Rogers City/Presque Isle)**

**Mike Ferguson, Fisheries Assistant (St. Marys River)**

### Support

**Lindsey Henski, Secretary**

## 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 work 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 reaching from Sault Ste. Marie to Oscoda. 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 Operations 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 2012. Imagine how good the fishing is in NLHMU if children can catch fish such as those shown below?



## Lake Sturgeon Management and Research

NLHMU is the home of Black Lake where extensive lake sturgeon research and management has been ongoing for nearly two decades. We work cooperatively with Sturgeon For Tomorrow and other agencies to carefully manage the harvest of Black Lake sturgeon each February during the specially regulated fishing season and receive assistance from other statewide Division personnel. The 2012 and 2013 sturgeon seasons provided an open fishery to all anglers, and the harvest quotas of 2 and 6 fish, respectively, were achieved successfully. We look forward to the 2014 fishing season at Black Lake and are always working with the public to improve the fishing season. Michigan State University and DNR personnel continue to tag adult sturgeon during the spring spawning run in the Upper Black River in an effort to better understand population size and dynamics. The Black River streamside rearing hatchery was built in cooperation with Tower-Kleber Limited Partnership and raises fish to supplement the population of lake sturgeon not only in Black Lake, but in Mullett and Burt lakes as well.

# Special Projects

## Inland Waterway Walleye Tagging Efforts

This is a three year effort of walleye tagging across the Inland Waterway lakes and rivers, including Mullett, Burt, Crooked, Pickerel lakes and their associated rivers. It is part of a cooperative study with Michigan State University and various tribal agencies to better understand population dynamics and movement of walleye in this system as a whole. More than 7,300 walleye were tagged in 2011; 1,800 in 2012; and this spring we cooperatively tagged another 3,500. Catching these fish year to year in different gear types allows us to better understand walleye movement through the system and even out to Lake Huron. Anglers have been assisting with the project by returning tags from fish they have caught and we urge anglers to continue doing so. Other parts of the project with MSU include diet analysis of walleye, larval walleye densities, and zooplankton production.



### *Did you know?*

*The Black River was one of Ernest Hemingway's favorite trout fishing destinations in Michigan. This famous brook trout river runs through our management unit.*

## Other Happenings....

Our personnel get very little rest in the spring, and that is the way we like it! The year 2012 was no exception. Aside from lake surveys, we participated in sucker removals at Heart Lake, bluegill transfers within the Pigeon River Country Forest, maintenance at state owned dams, coordination of pike marsh operations at Otsego Lake with the Northland Sportsmans Club, stocking fish from state hatcheries, muskellunge egg takes on the Detroit River, Shupac Lake fish testing for future fish transfers, and estimating pike densities at Jones Lake in Crawford County.



## Walleye Rearing and Stocking

Walleye rearing and stocking across our unit take considerable time and effort each year. Walleye fry are offspring of Muskegon River wild fish. We have two walleye rearing ponds in our unit where we release the fry and raise them to fingerling size. This requires maintenance work, assessing survival and growth, and harvesting. The rearing ponds are near Hillman and Alanson, and we get assistance on rearing these fish from the Thunder Bay Walleye Club and Pickerel-Crooked Lake Association (thanks to both). We also receive fingerlings from our DNR sister unit in Bay City when production is good. Finally, much of the St. Marys River stocking efforts are done cooperatively with two eastern U.P. ponds run by the Chippewa Ottawa Resource Authority and the Drummond Island Sportsman's Club.

# Special Projects

## Walleye Stocking continued....

From our **James Farm Pond** near Hillman we raised 167,258 fingerling walleye and stocked the following lakes with 1.5" fish: Lk Winyah 50,400, Big Ck Imp. 6,840, Avery Lk 18,000, Crooked Lk 6,840, Ess Lk 13,320, Big Bear Lk 20,000, Big Bradford Lk 12,280, Opal Lk 7,500, Dixon Lk 5,000, Lk Esau 14,400, Deer Lk 4,080, and Au Train Basin 8,598

From our **Reid-Berney Pond** near Alanson we raised 89,880 fingerling walleye and stocked 1.7" fish in these waters: Kleber Pd 9,000, Caribou Lk 52,290, Frenchmans Lk 6,750, Jones Lk 4,200, and McCollum Lk 17,640.

The St. Marys River system received 304,127 spring fingerling walleye spread throughout the river system as produced in the cooperative **eastern UP walleye ponds**. The following lakes were stocked with 2" walleye from the **Bay City rearing ponds**: Black Lk 192,541, Van Etten Lk 82,507, Au Sable Lk 26,526, and Clear Lk 19,119.

John Lyons



## Education and Outreach Spotlight

Each year NLHMU personnel spend time reaching out to the public to share our knowledge and expertise on local aquatic resources. Last year's efforts included our annual trip to the Au Sable River to provide an electrofishing demonstration to women with cancer at "Reeling and Healing". We also provided similar demonstrations on the South Branch Au Sable River at the DNR Academy of Natural Resources and to different high school and grade school groups from southern Michigan and Illinois as an educational tool. "Becoming an Outdoors Woman" event is a favorite of ours where we essentially take women fishing as part of their educational outdoors week. These are some specialized events, but we strive to reach out to the public each day through field visits, phone calls, and public meetings. This is an integral part of our job.



# Habitat Enhancement Spotlight

## Black River Watershed Improvement

NLHMU works with a diverse array of partners throughout northern MI to enhance the resources we manage. Some of these partners include Huron Pines RC/D, Conservation Resource Alliance, Tipp of the Mitt Watershed Council, the Upper Black River Council, Anglers of the Au Sable, and many others. Unit biologists often identify work that needs to be completed in an area and coordinate such activities with partners to get the work accomplished. Most often this involves reducing silt and sediment sources, and improving in-stream fish and wildlife habitat. The Upper Black River Council has been working closely with DNR Fish Division in

this watershed for over 20 years and has focused on habitat restoration and enhancement work. Work in recent years has focused on large woody structures in the river which are placed by ground crews. Such work is designed to enhance survival of young trout through the addition of cover, to provide additional hiding cover for adult trout, to trap silt and sediment at the shoreline zones, and to scour spawning gravel on certain occasions.

Other work in recent years has included identification and removal of old manmade and beaver dams at key locations, summer temperature monitoring throughout the watershed, road-stream crossing improvements as well as one dam removal, and even addition of spawning habitat in a brook trout nursery stream. Those wishing to learn more about this work can visit the Council website at: <http://www.upperblack.org/>.



## Fall Juvenile Walleye Evaluations

NLHMU stocks fingerling walleye throughout many lakes in the unit. We use an electrofishing boat at night to patrol the shallows of these stocked lakes to evaluate relative survival of stocked and wild walleye. Typically, we are evaluating juvenile (age 0 and 1) walleye. Getting information on survival and year class strength allows us to continually tweak our stocking practices.

During fall 2012 we conducted these evaluations at eight lakes regionally and covered many miles of shoreline. Included in this were Black, Burt, and Mullett lakes which were done cooperatively with multiple agencies. At Black Lake, we have found high survival of our recently stocked walleye, but continued poor production of wild

fingerling walleye. Burt Lake continues to produce quality wild fish while Mullett Lake walleye production is relatively low.

Other lakes surveyed were Big Bradford, Avery, Dixon, Ess, and Caribou. We also surveyed six miles of shoreline in the St. Marys Rivers system to determine walleye origin and production. This was a coordinated effort with multiple agencies and DNR offices as part of a St. Marys River walleye stocking and evaluation plan.



## Brown Trout Strain Evaluations

Our management unit houses some lakes and rivers that are part of a statewide DNR study to evaluate the survival and growth of two different strains of brown trout. These waters include the Au Sable River below Mio,

McCormick Lake, Lake 15, and Bridge Lake. We electrofish these waters each fall and evaluate results. The strains of trout are differentiated by fin clips (or lack of). Three years into the study we are finding in the Au Sable River that Sturgeon River strain brown trout survive slightly better than Wild Rose strain,

yet we are also finding many wild brown trout. In the aforementioned lakes, Wild Rose strain appears to survive better. In addition, McCormick Lake continues to be supplemented with many wild brown trout. This study will continue for a couple more years so keep an eye out for us on the water!



# Fall Activities

## Swan River Salmon Weir

The NLHMU oversees the Swan River salmon weir in Presque Isle County each fall. This weir near Rogers City was the back-up Chinook salmon egg take location to the Little Manistee River weir. The Swan River site is stocked with significant numbers of salmon each spring in order to sustain a quality spawning run of fish each October. In recent years,



we have not needed to take eggs at this location, but we still maintain a presence at the weir. We work closely with a contractor to collect and ship for processing the returning dying salmon. Each year we receive visitors at the weir including fish health inspectors from MSU, as well as groups of students and teachers from schools that are provided an on-site tour, a favorite for the kids!

## Personnel Spotlight—Tom Adams

Tom Adams is a fisheries technician within the Northern Lake Huron Management Unit. He was born in Rochester, Michigan and graduated from Lake Superior State University in 1983 with Associate Degrees in both Natural Resources Technology and Water Quality Technology. Tom's DNR career began at Drayton Plains Fish

Station near Detroit, and he transferred to the Hunt Creek Fisheries Research Station where he worked on special research projects from 1991-2010. The research station was temporarily closed in 2011, and it was at

that time that Tom joined us in our management unit in Gaylord and has now worked for the DNR for 25 years! Tom is an extremely well rounded technician that can do most anything you ask of him and he also serves as the Safety Officer for NLHMU.



# General Lake & Stream Surveys



## Links to our most recent

Status of the Fishery Reports can be found at: [http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-10364\\_52259\\_19056-46374--,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-10364_52259_19056-46374--,00.html)

Milligan Ck, Cheboygan County, 2013

North Branch Carp River, Mackinac County, 2013

Tower Pond, Cheboygan County, 2012

Weber Lake, Cheboygan County, 2012

Silver Lake, Cheboygan County, 2012

Grass Lake, Montmorency County, 2012

Cornwall Impoundment, Cheboygan County, 2012

Long Lake, Alpena County, 2012

Town Corner Lake, Montmorency County 2011

Avalon Lake, Montmorency County 2011

Big Lake, Otsego County 2011

McCollum Lake, Oscoda County, 2011

W Br Maple River, Emmet County, 2010

Beaver Lake, Alpena County, 2010

Crooked Lake, Alcona County, 2010

Otsego Lake, Otsego County, 2009

Avery Lake, Montmorency County, 2009

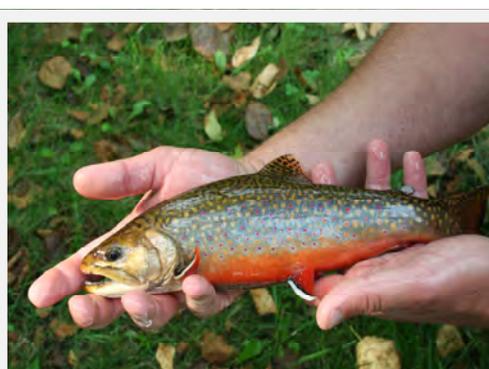
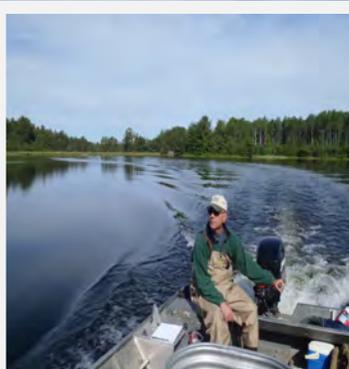
Lake Winyah, Alpena County, 2009

Thumb Lake, Charlevoix County, 2009

Osmun Lake, Cheboygan County, 2008

Fletcher Pond, Alpena County, 2008

Lake Ferdelman, Presque Isle County, 2008



# General Lake and Stream Surveys

## General Lake and Stream Surveys - 2012

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. A total of 5 lakes and 18 streams were surveyed in 2012. Those waterbodies include:

Au Sable River 2 sites  
 Bois Blanc Isle lakes (Mary, Thompson, Twins)  
 Bowens Creek  
 Brush Creek  
 Cornwall Impoundment  
 Crumley Creek  
 Gokee Creek  
 Grass Lake  
 Haymeadow Creek  
 Jones Lake  
 Little Brush Creek  
 Maple River 2 sites  
 Milligan Creek  
 Montague Creek  
 North Branch Au Sable River  
 Pigeon River  
 Saunders Creek  
 Stoney Creek  
 Sturgis Creek  
 Tower Pond  
 Welch Creek  
 West Branch Maple River



# Looking Ahead 2013...

## 2013 Scheduled Surveys

Look for us on the following waters soon be sure to stop by and see us!

Walleye Tagging

Inland Waterway

Steelhead Stocking Evaluation

Au Sable River, Harrisville Harbor

Fish Removal / Transfer Project

Shupac Lake

Fish Community Surveys

St. Marys River, Atlanta Pond, Dukes Lake, Elliott Creek, Jackson Lake, Kinross Lake, Twin Lakes

Trout Population Estimates

Black River, Hunt Creek, North Branch Au Sable River, Pigeon River, West Branch Sturgeon River

Lake Sturgeon Stocking Evaluation

Black Lake

Adult Walleye Evaluation

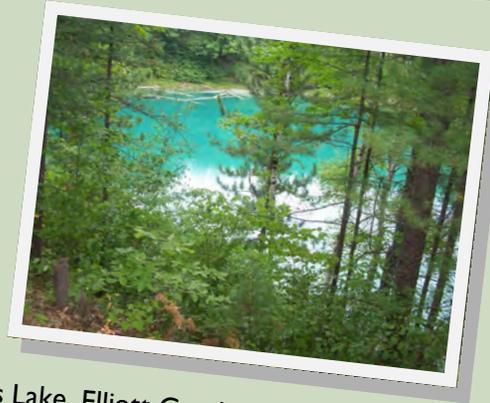
St. Marys River

Fall Juvenile Walleye Assistance

Burt Lake, Frenchmans Lake, Grand Lake, Hubbard Lake, Long Lake, Mullett Lake, St. Marys River

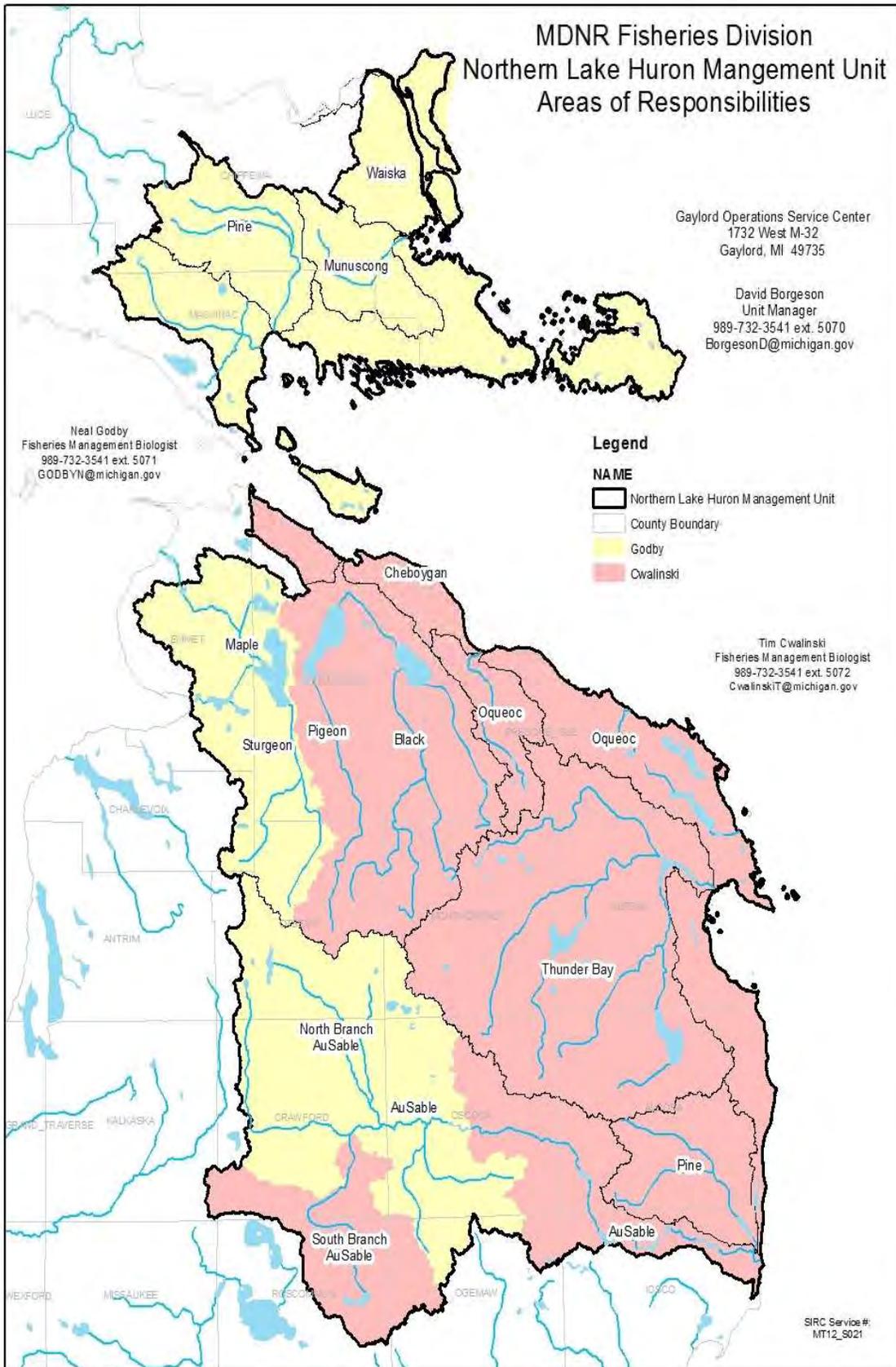
Trout Stocking Evaluation

Au Sable River, Bear Den Lake, Big Chub, Bridge Lake, Lake 15, McCormick Lake



# Contact us at any time

## MDNR Fisheries Division Northern Lake Huron Management Unit Areas of Responsibilities



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