

Southern Lake Huron Management Unit



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What is the SLHMU?

The Southern Lake Huron Management Unit (SLHMU) encompasses the southern Michigan shores of Lake Huron including Saginaw Bay and all of the waters that make up the watersheds that drain into the southern portion of Lake Huron. Our work area includes all or portions of the following counties: Arenac, Bay, Clare, Genesee, Gladwin, Gratiot, Huron, Iosco, Isabella, Lapeer, Livingston, Midland, Mecosta, Montcalm, Oakland, Ogemaw, Roscommon, Saginaw, Sanilac, Shiawassee, St. Clair, and Tuscola. Fisheries staff working in this unit include a Unit Manager and Management Biologist who work out of the Bay City Operations Service Center, a Management Biologist stationed at the Lapeer State Game Area, a technician staff who work out of the Bay City Fisheries Warehouse, and 5 Fisheries Assistants (creel clerks) who perform the Great Lakes creel census out of various ports.

Who we are.

We are public trustees employed to fulfill the mission, vision, and values of the Michigan DNR, Fisheries Division.

Fisheries Division Mission—to protect and enhance Michigan's aquatic life and habitats for the benefit of current and future generations.

Fisheries Division Vision—to provide world-class freshwater fishing opportunities, supported by healthy aquatic environments, which enhance the quality of life in Michigan.

Fisheries Division Values—the following six values guide the work for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Fisheries Division:

Integrity
Collaboration

Leadership
Transparency

Innovation
Professionalism





Did you know?

Did you know that the East Branch Au Gres River was separated from the Au Gres River? Due to flooding, sometime around the 1920s, the East Branch was diverted away from the Au Gres and a new outlet was constructed to flow directly into Lake Huron north of Au Gres. This drain segment is known as Whitney Drain.

Southern Lake Huron Creel Census

Great Lakes Creel Census in the SLHMU is part of the Statewide Angler Survey Program. Five Fisheries Assistants (creel clerks) conduct the census on the waters of greater Saginaw Bay (including Tawas Bay) and ports along the tip and outside of the Thumb. Ports and sites regularly visited by our clerks include Tawas Bay, Singing Bridge, the Standish – Pinconning – Linwood area, Bay City, Essexville, Quanicassee, Sebewaing, Bay Port, Wildfowl Bay, Caseville, Port Austin, Grindstone City, Harbor Beach, Port Sanilac, and Lexington.

Saginaw Bay receives more fishing effort than each of Lake Superior and Lake Erie. It accounts for 60% of all of Lake Huron's fishing effort. In 2013, anglers spent 600,000 hours fishing Saginaw Bay and our Saginaw Bay Creel Clerks interviewed over 10,000 anglers. The highest count of anglers occurred at the end of January 2013. An estimated 347,000 fish were harvested in Saginaw Bay (173,000 walleye and 161,000 yellow perch).

Our clerks see it all. Some highlight moments include:

Matt helped some anglers who mistakenly thought Sand Point was Tawas.

Steve interviewed a 10- year old and asked, "when did you start fishing?" (meaning what time) and the kid answered, "when I was 5 years old", then Steve asked "what are you fishing for?" (meaning what species are you targeting) and the kid answered, "because my mom told me to get out of the house and quit bothering her".

Kevin babysat a kid whose dad lost his 4 wheeler through the ice.

Wayne had several anglers ask if they could donate their fish "to science"!

Fisheries Assistant Wayne Heinzman will be transferring from SLHMU to Fisheries Research in Charlevoix. His hard work ethic will be missed. Michael Tower, a Fisheries Assistant in Alpena, will be transferring to Wayne's position. We expect the transition to take place at the end of February or beginning of March.



Wayne Heinzman (right). Good luck in Charlevoix!

2014 Projects

Vassar Dam Removed

Thanks to the Cass River Greenway Committee, city leaders and active citizens, the Vassar Dam on the Cass River was removed in 2013. This 1850s dam was in poor shape and partially breached creating navigation and safety hazards. The removal project cost \$90,000 and was funded by the DNR-Dam Management Grant Program, USFWS-Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network, and local matches.

In January 2014, the City of Vassar received the **Osprey Award for Conservation Excellence-Conservation Project of the Year** from the Saginaw Basin Land Conservancy for this project. Congratulations!

The Vassar Dam removal will now allow the City of Vassar to move forward with the Cass River Water Trail which will connect communities using this valuable resource.



Trout Creel Surveys—Update



Southern Lake Huron Management Unit continues conducting a postcard/internet survey to help in the management of two trout lakes. Adding the winter or ice-fishery is important to understanding the lake's full potentials.

Anglers who fish on Marl Lake, Montcalm County and Lake George, Ogemaw County are asked to fill out surveys.

www.surveymonkey.com/s/marllakesurvey

www.surveymonkey.com/s/lakegeorgesurvey

Participation in this survey effort is key to proper fisheries management.

Data Received to date: Marl Lake--25 post cards, 3 survey monkey

Lake George--2 post cards, 8 survey monkey

SLHMU WALLEYE AND NORTHERN PIKE REARING

SLHMU Plans to operate 5 walleye rearing ponds in 2014. Newly hatched walleye (fry) are put into these ponds in April and allowed to grow until they reach 1-2 inches. They are then harvested and stocked into various water bodies around the state. Ponds are located in Kawkawlin, Auburn (2), Tawas and Au Gres.

In addition, SLHMU will be operating the Sanford Rearing Marsh in Midland county for northern pike. Adult northern pike will be placed into the marsh and allowed to spawn naturally. After approximately 6 weeks, the marsh will be drained and the newly produced spring fingerlings will be collected for stocking. These spring fingerlings should average 4 inches.



To obtain information on where we stock fish, visit the DNR, Fisheries website at: <http://www.michigandnr.com/fishstock/>

Inland Lake and Stream Surveys

During the course of the year, SLHMU conducts a number of inland lake and stream surveys. Typically, habitat and biological data is collected during the open water season and analyzed during the winter months. Completed reports are ready in the spring of the following year.

The following surveys were conducted in 2013 and reports are available upon request by April 2014:

Inland Lakes

Nestor Lake, Clare County	Wildwood Lake, Oakland County
Tobico Lagoon, Bay County	Grousehaven Lake, Ogemaw County
Holloway Reservoir, Genesee County	Lake Minnewanna, Lapeer County
Lake Chemung, Livingston County	Blanchard Mill Pond, Isabella County
Streaked Lake, Gladwin County	Fish Lake, Lapeer County

Streams

Kawkawlin River, Bay County	Cass River, Tuscola County
S. Br. Bad River, Saginaw County	Chippewa River, Midland County
S. Br. Shiawassee, Livingston County	Gamble Creek, Ogemaw County
Rifle River, Ogemaw County	E. Br. Au Gres River, Arenac County
Farmers Creek, Lapeer County	

The following lake and streams are scheduled for surveying in 2014:

Inland Lakes

Grousehaven Lake, Ogemaw County	Tipsico Lake, Oakland County
Skidway Lake, Ogemaw County	Lake Chemung, Livingston County
Alma Impoundment, Gratiot County	Otter Lake, Lapeer County
Gorrel Lake, Mecosta County	Holloway Reservoir, Genesee County

Streams

Sugar Creek, Gratiot County	S. Fork. Bad River, Saginaw County
Gulley Creek, Iosco County	Shiawassee River, Shiawassee County
Cass River, Tuscola County	Houghton Creek, Ogemaw County
N. Branch Tobacco, Clare County	

Status of the fishery reports are available for select waters and are listed by county. Check this link to see them:

http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-10364_52259_19056-46374--,00.html



Equipment Spotlight—Electrofishing Boat



Fisheries Division uses a variety of specialized gear for collecting fish. Our electrofishing boat or "boomshocker" is one of the most versatile and often used pieces of equipment used for fish collection. The boat produces a DC electrical current that momentarily stuns a fish allowing netters to capture them. A gas powered generator is used to produce an electrical current which is controlled by sophisticated electronics on the boat. The circuit is created with a positive charge developing on metal droppers held by the long booms on the front of the boat while metal droppers on the boat serve as a ground. Fish are generally stunned for only a few seconds - long enough to be netted and placed into a live well. In most cases the electrofishing boat is effective in stunning fish in a 6 foot circumference and to a 6 foot depth.

As a non-lethal method for collecting fish, it is used to sample fish in both large rivers and lakes. We routinely use it for capturing walleye for tagging or egg collection. We use it extensively to collect all types and sizes of fish in the shallow waters of our lakes. Oftentimes, our lake sampling is done at night when predator fish enter the shallows to feed. As a result, the boat is well lit and resembles a UFO (unidentified floating object) in the dark.

Our boat was made by the Smith Root Company of Vancouver, WA who specializes in electrofishing equipment. The boat was purchased in 1994 for approximately \$30,000. It is an 18 ft. aluminum made jon boat powered by a 50hp outboard. To completely replace this equipment in today's market, it would cost approximately \$90,000. Fortunately, our boat has been quite dependable and our Fisheries Technicians have become adept at making necessary repairs. So if you see this odd looking vessel out on the waters, be assured it is your Fisheries Division at work.

Partnerships

“Many hands make lighter work”

SLHMU partners with a variety of sport-fishing and watershed organizations to enhance our mutual interests in improving fishing and fish habitat. Our walleye rearing program receives lots of physical and financial support from **Walleyes of Iosco County**, the **Arenac County Walleye Club**, and the **Saginaw Bay Walleye Club**. The **Thumb Chapter of the Michigan Steelheaders** has operated net pens for steelhead and chinook salmon at Harbor Beach for many years to improve fishing on the outside of the Thumb. The **Friends of the Shiawassee River** are leading the efforts to remove or modify the Corunna and Shiatown dams. The **Flint River Watershed Coalition**, working with more than 80 private land-owners, organizes and oversees log-jam removal along the South Branch Flint River in Lapeer County. Their efforts have stabilized the stream-banks and opened 20 miles of the river for canoes, kayaks, and float –fishing trips. Similarly, The **Rifle River Restoration Committee** and Huron Pines are working to reduce sedimentation and stabilize and improve habitat in the Rifle River System in Ogemaw and Arenac Counties. More watershed groups are organizing to plan similar work in other watersheds.

Two Special Volunteers

SLHMU was fortunate to have two college student volunteers to assist us with our field work in 2013. Jessica Haller, a Lake Superior State University student and Jacob Bowman, a Northern Michigan University student both contributed over 100 hours of volunteer services. We hope these two gained insight into the Fisheries profession that will aid them with their careers. Thank you for your help Jessica and Jacob!





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