

FISHERIES DIVISION
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES

Southern Lake Michigan Management Unit



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What is the SLMMU?

The Southern Lake Michigan Management Unit (SLMMU) encompasses all of the water that make up the watersheds that drain into the southern portion of Lake Michigan. Our work area includes all or portions of the following counties: Muskegon, Montcalm, Gratiot, Ottawa, Kent, Ionia, Clinton, Shiawassee, Allegan, Barry, Eaton, Ingham, Van Buren, Kalamazoo, Calhoun, Jackson, Berrien, Cass, St. Joseph, Branch, and Hillsdale. Most fisheries staff within this unit work out of the Plainwell Operation Service Center and include a Unit Manager, three Fisheries Biologists, a Technician Supervisor, two Technicians, and an Administrative Assistant. Our two creel clerks work the ports of Grand Haven, Holland, Port Sheldon, South Haven, and St. Joseph.



Walleye Stocking

Despite the cold start to the spring and record flooding on the Muskegon River, the walleye egg take was a success. Eggs from the Muskegon River are hatched at Wolf Lake State Fish Hatchery and fry are transferred to Muskegon, Belmont, Gun Lake, Union Lake, and Jackson rearing ponds and directly stocked into rivers. The Grand River received 2.7 million fry in Ionia and Kent counties and Thornapple Lake received 432,800 fry. The ponds raise walleye to a spring fingerling (approximately 1.2 inches) before being stocked in late May. A total of 633,534 spring fingerling walleye were raised in SLMMU ponds and an additional 122,776 spring fingerlings were provided by the Southern Lake Huron Management Unit to help us stock all our waters— Thank You! Below are the waters that were stocked within the Southern Lake Michigan Management Unit (others were stocked in Central Lake Michigan Management waters):

Black River	10,124
Diamond Lake	53,031
Gun Lake	39,852
Kalamazoo River	50,776
Klinger Lake	53,673



Lake Macatawa	31,508
Maple Lake	8,694
Mona Lake	34,834
Portage Lake	18,250
St. Joe River	97,750

Walleye Rearing Pond Cooperators

Rearing walleye in ponds takes a lot of work and help from our co-ops. Our unit currently has cooperative agreements with Gun Lake Protective Association, West Michigan Walleye Club, Union Lake Association, and Holland Fish and Game Club. The members of these groups help with pond maintenance (mowing and brush removal, dike repairs, and water control structure repairs), fertilizer costs, fertilizer applications, fry stocking, fingerling harvest, and fingerling stocking. Their financial support and work force are instrumental to our walleye stocking program in Southwest Michigan.



Thank You Cooperators!!



Union Lake Association

The Holland Fish & Game Club
10840 Chicago Dr., Zeeland, MI 49464



It Worked!!!



For the first time in over 20 years, the Southern Lake Michigan Management Unit was able to produce production numbers of fall fingerling walleye. Mike Wilson (Technician) brought his past hatchery experience to the unit and was able to produce 8,294 walleye with the help of Matt Smith (Technician), volunteers from the West Michigan Walleye Club, and staff from Wolf Lake State Hatchery. The advantage of these walleye is their size. At an average length of 6 inches, their survival is significantly better –especially in southern Michigan lakes. Walleye were only native to rivers in southern Michigan and did not persist in our lakes like they do in northern Michigan. High fish diversity and density, lack of habitat, and warmer summer water temperatures prevent walleye from naturally reproducing in southern lakes. These larger fish are better at avoiding competition and predation giving them an excellent chance to survive and produce great fisheries.

Reduced staff levels and the cost of feeding minnows to these hungry fish forced the discontinuation of this program. With assistance from volunteers and our ability to raise our own minnows in adjacent ponds, it looks like there is a new opportunity to continue and grow the fall fingerling program.

Waters Stocked

Duck Lake (Calhoun County)	1,990	Portage Lake (Jackson County)	1,794
Long Lake (St. Joseph County)	2,200	Sand Lake (St. Joseph County)	22
Palmer Lake (St. Joseph County)	156	Wabasis Lake (Kent County)	2,132



New Fishing Opportunities



Universal Access at Lake Interstate

Nicholas Utter of Charlotte completed an Eagle Scout Project at Lake Interstate (Eaton County) that made significant improvements to the trail and fishing platform. Nick tried taking a friend in a wheelchair to Lake Interstate last year and found it extremely difficult to get down the trail and onto the fishing platform. His interest in helping others and for fishing gave him the idea to make the improvements for an Eagle Scout Project. All through donated materials and labor, Nick widened and leveled the trail using crushed limestone, and he resurfaced the fishing platform and sloped it evenly to the trail.



Thank you Nick and Boy Scouts of America!!!

Rice Creek Trout Fishing and Canoe Access Site
Calhoun County
Marengo Township



New Trout Fishing Access!!!

Funding to purchase two new trout fishing access sites were recently approved. A 56 acre parcel along Rice Creek just south of Partello between 19 and 20 mile road in Calhoun County. The site will provide secured access to a stocked brown trout stream. This property will be managed by Calhoun Conservation District and Kalamazoo Valley of Trout Unlimited is excited to conduct habitat enhancement projects in Rice Creek. The second purchase is a 120 acre parcel along Dowagiatic Creek, which is also stocked with brown trout. This parcel will be managed by a Cass County entity and already has the St. Joseph River Valley Fly Fishers and Valparaiso University Biology Club working to enhance the creek and the University of Notre Dame studying the biodiversity of the surrounding land.

Dowagiatic Creek Fishing Access Site
Cass County
Volinia Township



There are still a few more hoops to jump through, and public access availability is expected by late summer of 2015.

Habitat Enhancement Spotlight



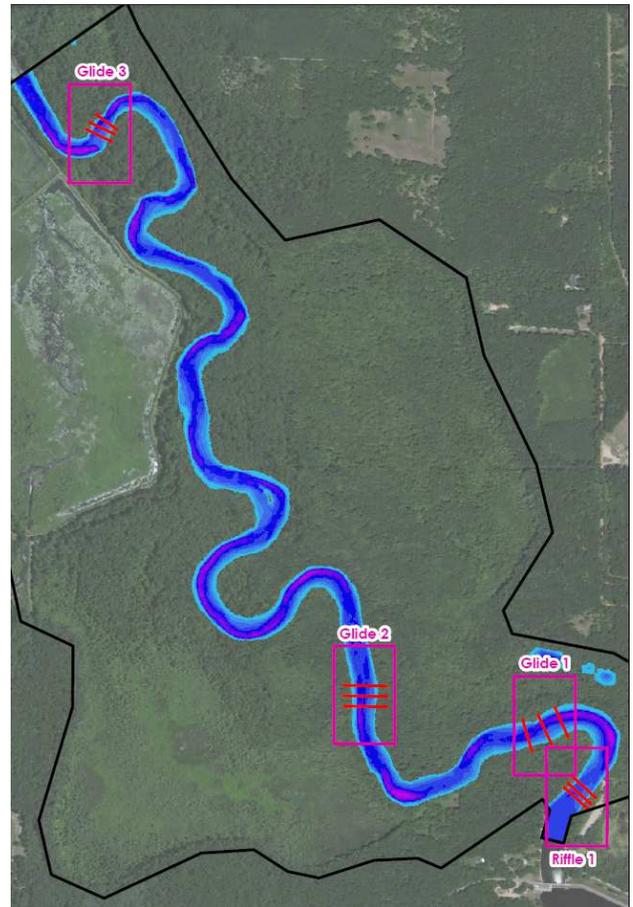
The Morgan Dam on High Bank Creek (Barry County) was removed in November of 2014. High Bank Creek is a coldwater stream that is stocked annually with Brown Trout. The dam was constructed to run a grist mill in the late 1800's. The mill was in operation until the 1940's, and the structure collapsed in the 1960's. Since the dam's collapse and subsequent draining of the impoundment, sediment releases have been high causing a large sediment delta to form in Thornapple Lake at the mouth of High Bank Creek. The dam removal and riffle construction will stabilize the channel and allow for fish passage. An additional 1,200 feet of stream through the former impoundment will be stabilized in 2015, which should significantly reduce the sediment load. The project was managed and partially funded by the Barry Conservation District. Major funding was awarded through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Fish Passage Program. The DNR Parks and Recreation Heavy Equipment Crew from Allegan conducted the project.



Kalamazoo River Spawning-Habitat Project

Although substrate is coarse immediately below the Allegan (Calkins) Dam, flow velocities and turbulence equates to poor survival of fish eggs including the state threatened lake sturgeon. In order to increase and enhance spawning habitat below the dam, a riffle and three glides will be constructed with natural rock. Consumers Energy is contributing \$200,000 towards the project and Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band (Gun Lake Band) is matching the funds with a \$199,000 U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Coastal Program grant. We intend to use equipment and operators from the Allegan DNR– Parks and Recreation Office to complete the project. Construction is expected to begin in summer of 2015.

Increased and enhanced habitat will not only benefit lake sturgeon, it will also benefit smallmouth bass, walleye, suckers, and chinook salmon. These structures will also hold steelhead, coho salmon, and brown trout for anglers. Secondary goals are to address localized channel instability and restore wetland hydrology to the Koopman Marsh and adjacent floodplain forest.



More Dam Removals!!!

With the help from the Michigan DNR Aquatic Habitat and Dam Management grant programs, fish in Southwest Michigan will have access to over **270 more miles** of river and tributaries. For more information about these grant programs visit:

<http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-58225---,00.html>

Contact: Chris Freiburger

Freiburger@michigan.gov 517-284-5824



Niles "Pucker Street" Dam - Dowagiac River (Cass Co.)



Hubbardston Dam - Fish Creek (Ionia Co.)



Lyons Dam - Grand River (Ionia Co.)

Lake, River and Stream Surveys

During the spring, summer, and early Fall of 2014, the SLMMU staff completed 26 surveys. These surveys included walleye and brown trout stocking evaluations, status and trends surveys, fish community surveys, habitat improvement evaluations, and natural resource damage assessments. Most stream surveys use electrofishing gear while lake surveys use a combination of netting and electrofishing gear to sample fish. A total of 17 streams and 9 lakes were surveyed (some streams had multiple sampling locations and some were conducted for other Units). Those waterbodies surveyed in the southern Lake Michigan Management Unit include:

- Brush Creek (Van Buren County)
- Center Lake (Jackson County)
- Coldwater Lake (Branch County)
- Fawn River (St. Joseph County)
- Grand River (Eaton County)
- Grand River (Kent County)
- Grand River (Ionia County)
- Grand River (Ottawa County)
- Indian Lake (Cass County)
- Kalamazoo River (Allegan County)
- Kalamazoo River (Calhoun County)



- Kalamazoo river (Kalamazoo County)
- Lincoln Lake (Kent County)
- Looking Glass River (Clinton County)
- Old Bitty Creek (Berrien County)
- Pleasant Lake (St. Joseph County)
- Pokagon Creek (Cass County)
- Portage Creek (Kalamazoo County)
- Prairie River (Branch County)
- Saubee Lake (Barry County)
- Silver Creek (Allegan County)
- Spring Brook (Kalamazoo County)
- Talmadge Creek (Calhoun County)

Coldwater Lake

This lake was surveyed as part of the Status and Trends program for inland lakes. Coldwater Lake (Branch County) is classified as a large lake at 1,579 acres with a maximum depth of 90 feet. The lake is heavily developed except for the southern bay, which is the location of Coldwater Lake State Park. During the 2014 MDNR survey, a total of 5,507 fish representing 30 species were caught. Bluegill were the most frequently collected species with a total of 1,421 caught, representing 26% of the catch. The bluegill ranged from one to nine inches in length. Hybrid sunfish, rock bass, and redear sunfish were also abundant. Minnow and shiners were also abundant representing 40% of the total catch. The main predators in the lake were largemouth bass (from 2 to 17 inches in length), smallmouth bass (from 3 to 14 inches in length, and northern pike (from 15 to 34 inches in length). Other gamefish species captured included black crappie, pumpkinseed sunfish, and yellow perch. The largest fish caught was a 45 inch longnose gar.

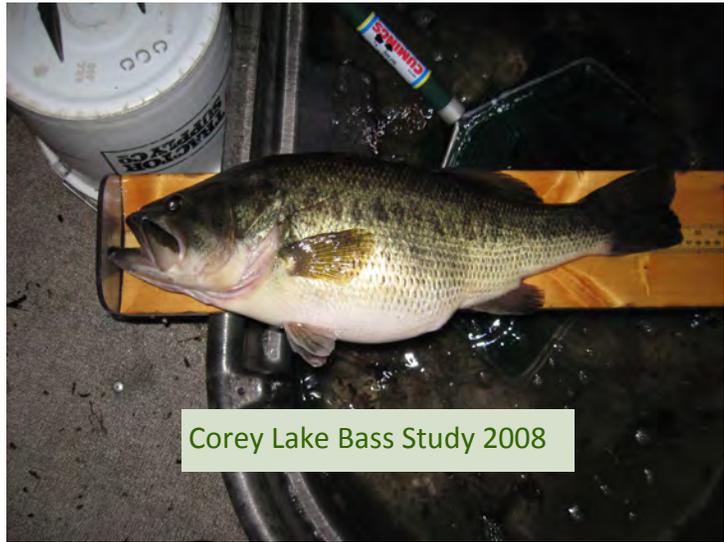
For more information regarding this and other 2014 surveys, contact the Plainwell Operation Services Center at 269-685-6851 and ask to speak to a Fisheries Biologist.



2015 Lake and Stream Surveys

During the spring and early summer, our unit conducts fish community surveys on lakes when water temperatures are between 55 and 75 degrees Fahrenheit. Our stream surveys are mostly conducted in July and August. A variety of gear types are used on lakes including nets and night-time electrofishing while day-time electrofishing is the main gear used on rivers and streams. Here is a list of waters that we plan to survey in 2015:

- Grand River, Kent, Ionia, Eaton Co.
- Lake Lavine, Branch Co.
- Gun Lake, Barry Co.
- Thornapple River, Barry Co.
- Thornapple Lake, Barry Co.
- Kalamazoo River, Calhoun and Allegan Co.
- Carter Lake, Barry Co.
- Lime Lake, Kent Co.
- Big Crooked Lake, Van Buren Co.
- Little Crooked Lake, Van Buren Co.
- Looking Glass River, Clinton Co.
- Prairie River, Branch Co.
- Talmadge Creek, Calhoun Co.
- Big Meadow Creek, Berrien Co.

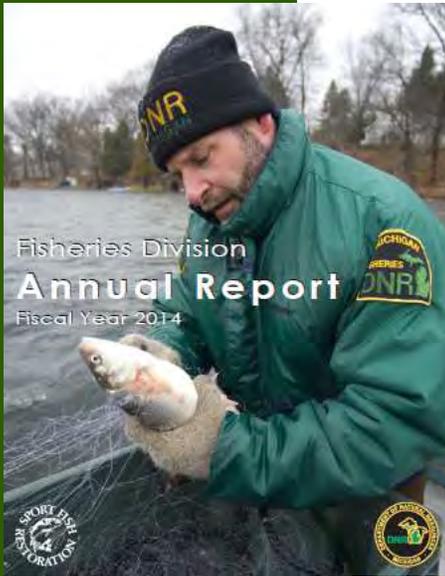


- Silver Creek, Allegan Co.
- Mill Creek, Berrien Co.
- Pokagon Creek, Cass Co.
- Spring Brook, Kalamazoo Co.
- Hemlock Lake, Cass Co.

Links to our most recent Status of the Fishery Reports;

- Baker Lake, Barry County: http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/2014-174_450970_7.pdf
- Clear Lake, Van Buren County: http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/2014-176_452140_7.pdf
- Duck Lake, Calhoun County: http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/2014-173_450968_7.pdf
- Lake Lavine, Branch County: http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/2014-175_477895_7.pdf
- Lake Templene, St. Joseph County: http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/2014-182_473136_7.pdf

Interested in Learning More about Fisheries Division?



If so, check out our web page www.michigan.gov/fishing

Where you Can:

- Read our 2013-2017 Strategic Plan.
- Read our 2014 Annual Report.
- Buy a fishing license.
- Read or sign up to receive weekly fishing reports.
- Subscribe to email updates on a variety of topics.

Where Do We Stock Fish?

The SLMMU works closely with our hatcheries to stock fish in the near-shore waters of Lake Michigan and inland lakes and streams. To find out where we stock fish, and the history of fish stocking back to 1979, visit <http://www.michigandnr.com/fishstock/> to use our online Fish Stocking Database.

Did you know?

Daphnia, found in most lakes, are an important food for fish and are only 1-5 mm in length. .



Where Else Can I Fish Around Here?

Family Friendly Fishing Waters

Are you looking for a great place to go fishing that is easy to access, has a high likelihood of catching fish, has various amenities, and is all around family-friendly? Then the Family Friendly Fishing Waters project can help!

Visit the following website for more information:

<http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-10364-299046--,00.html>

Do you know of Family Friendly sites that are not already identified? If so, we need your help! There is a survey at the above web site to nominate new sites. Thanks!





To obtain information on lake or stream surveys from this year or years prior or to ask any questions, please feel free to contact us. Use the map below to select the most appropriate biologist to contact;

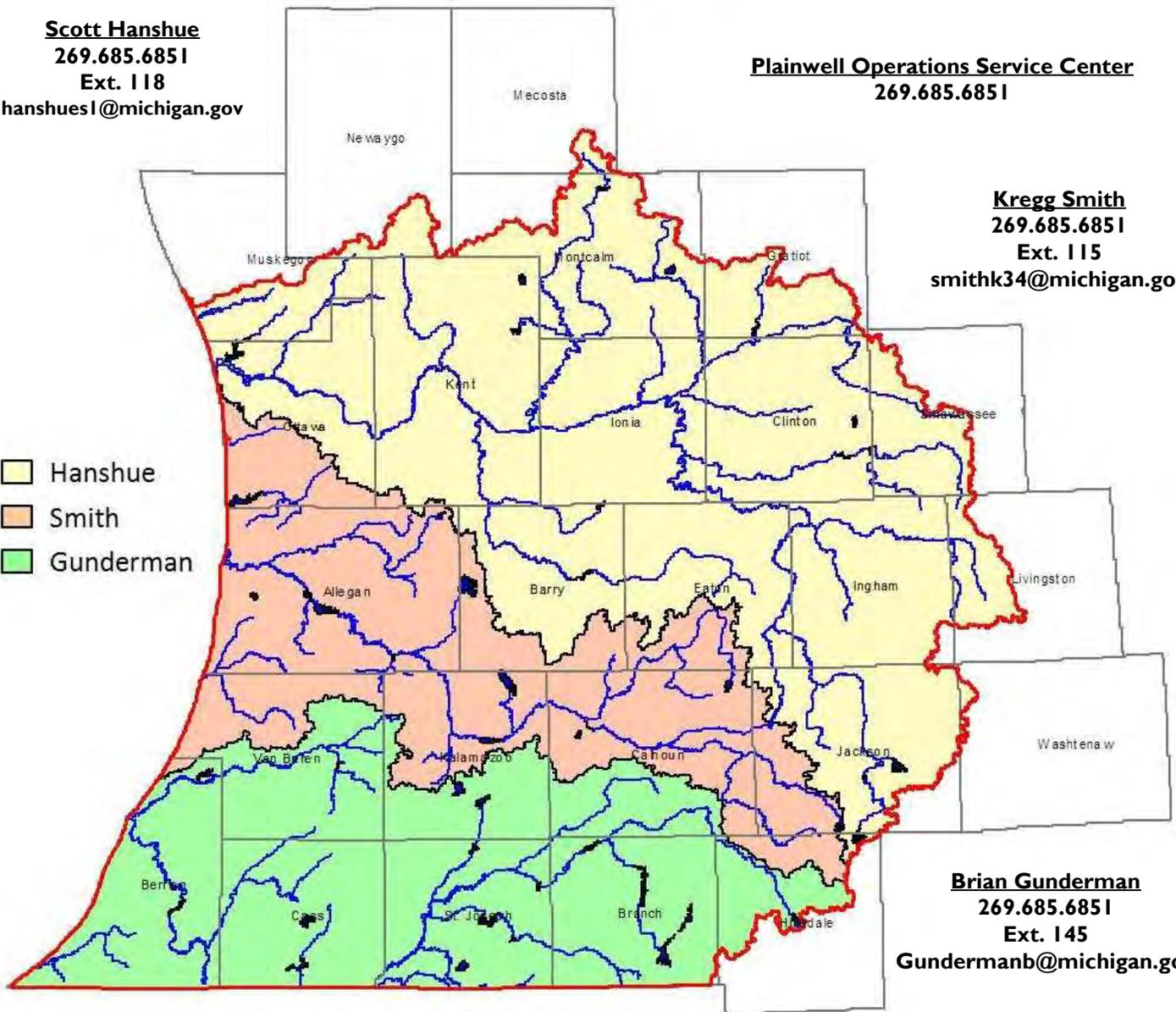
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