

FISHERIES DIVISION
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES

Southern Lake Michigan Management Unit



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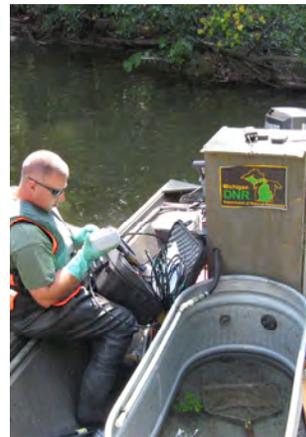
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What is the SLMMU?

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, three Technicians, and a Fisheries Stateworker. The two creel clerks work the ports of Grand Haven, Holland, Port Sheldon, South Haven, and St. Joseph.



Walleye Rearing Ponds

In 2013 SLMMU operated five walleye rearing ponds. Jackson, Muskegon, and Belmont ponds are operated with unit staff with assistance from angler clubs in the form of brushing, fertilizing, and harvest. Gun Lake and Union ponds are operated primarily by angler clubs through cooperative agreements. The DNR supplies the fish fry and the clubs care for the fish and ponds until harvest. Unfortunately, the Jackson and Muskegon production was 70% down this year due to flooding issues and fry mortality. The rest of the ponds did well, so we were able to stock 13 different lakes and seven river sites. Thanks to West Michigan Walleye Club, White Lake Area Sportfishing Association, Union Lake Association, and Gun Lake Protection Association for all their hard work!

Jackson Pond

Magician Lake	27,373
Fish Lake	17,160
Mattison Lake	15,350
Cedar Lake	16,993
Lake of the Woods	17,569
Selkirk Lake	4,764
Total Harvest	99,209

Muskegon Pond

Galien River	9,840
Black River	9,840
St. Joseph River	41,249
Hart Impoundment	18,602
Kalamazoo River	50,550
Total Harvest	130,081

Belmont Pond

White Lake	108,896
Baptist Lake	10,565
Pickerel Lake	17,865
Nichols Lake	9,965
Wolf Lake	17,569
Selkirk Lake	13,265
Total Harvest	160,556

Union Pond

Union Lake	11,750
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Gun Lake Ponds

Gun Lake	48,737
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Meridian Township Parks

SLMMU contributed towards the purchase of hybrid bluegills for the Central Park Fishing Pond located at 5151 Marsh Road in Okemos. The pond is open to the public and fishing poles and tackle are available. Meridian Township also holds fishing derbies and classes at the pond. Other outdoor education classes are also provided through the township. Visit their website at:

<http://www.meridian.mi.us/index.asp?>



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!



Your Fishing Source

Search over 7,000 lakes in Michigan based upon location, overall acreage, maximum depth, type of fish, and more! Discover lakes near you that you may have never known existed. Visit: <http://yourfishingsource.com/>

Pier Michigan

Pier Michigan is a website dedicated to pier fishing in Michigan:

<http://www.piermichigan.org/>

It is your portal to outstanding pier fishing in Michigan



Habitat Enhancement Spotlight

Restoring fish, flow in the St. Joseph River

Since the beginning of time - or at least since before 1863 - the St. Joseph River has meandered unfettered for 210 miles from its origins at Baw Beese Lake in Hillsdale County to Lake Michigan at the cities of St. Joseph and Benton Harbor. Considering the numerous tributaries flowing into the St. Joseph River, the watershed encompasses more than 1,800 stream miles. Before 1863, when the city of Niles constructed the first dam on the river, fish moved freely throughout the river system. Since that time, numerous man-made impediments to fish passage have been constructed on the river and streams in the watershed. By the late 1990s, there were 190 registered dams on the St. Joe and its tributaries as well as uncounted unregistered barriers.

Although these dams have provided some economic and recreational benefits, they have adversely affected fish communities by blocking spawning migrations, interfering with seasonal movements, and fragmenting populations. Dams also influence fish habitat by blocking downstream movement of large woody structure and detritus (e.g., small pieces of wood and leaves), disrupting the sediment balance above and below impoundments, altering flow regimes and channel dimensions, and elevating stream water temperatures.

Many of the dams across Michigan are near the end of their life expectancy and no longer fulfill their original purposes. These dams are excellent candidates for removal.

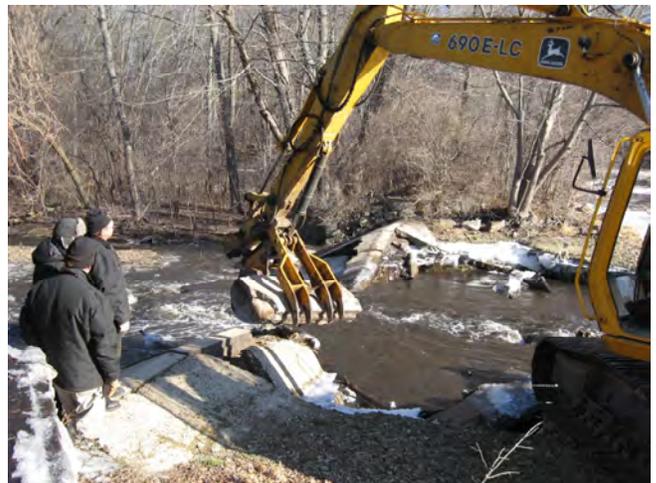
The DNR has already assisted with several dam removal projects in the St. Joseph River watershed. For example, DNR Fisheries Division staff partnered with the DNR Parks and Recreation Division's heavy equipment crew to remove the Jonesville Dam on the upper St. Joseph River in January 2011.

The DNR also provided funding and technical assistance for the removal of the Watervliet spillway and diversion dams on the Paw Paw River during fall 2011. This large-scale project involved the collaboration of multiple organizations (including Environmental Consulting & Technology, Inc., Southwest Michigan Planning Commission, the Nature Conservancy, Two Rivers Coalition and the City of Watervliet) and funding from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Berrien County.

It took more than a century for humans to construct all the barriers in the St. Joseph River watershed. Removal of those barriers will not occur overnight. With help from a wide range of partners, the DNR has begun the process of reconnecting stream reaches and restoring fish populations in this major river system. Over time, fish movement in the St. Joseph River system will return to a more natural state of affairs.

To learn more about the St. Joseph River and the Fish Passage Group. Visit:

http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-10366_46403_63473-300024--00.html



Jonesville Dam in the process of being removed.



Site of Jonesville Dam one year after removal.

Lake, River and Stream Surveys

During the spring, summer, and early Fall of 2012, the SLMMU staff completed 32 surveys. These surveys included walleye and rainbow trout stocking evaluations, status and trends surveys, regulation evaluations, general surveys, 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 13 streams and 8 lakes were surveyed (some streams had multiple sampling locations). Those waterbodies include:

Baker Lake (Barry County)	Prairie River (Branch County)
Bear Creek (Kent County)	St. Joseph River (Berrien County)
Cary Lake (Branch County)	Sand Lake (St. Joseph County)
Clear Lake (Van Buren County)	Spring Brook (Kent County)
Craig Lake (Branch County)	Stout Creek (Kent County)
Duck Lake (Calhoun County)	Talmadge Creek (Calhoun County)
Flat River (Kent County)	White Pigeon River (St. Joseph County).
Grand River (Ottawa County)	
Indian Lake (Kalamazoo County)	
Kalamazoo River (Calhoun County)	
Morrison Lake (Branch County)	
Nottawa River (St. Joseph County)	
Portage Creek (Kalamazoo County)	



Baker Lake

This lake was investigated to document the current status of the fish community as Baker Lake (Barry County) had not been surveyed since 1984. Baker Lake is part of the Gun Lake chain of lakes that flow to the Kalamazoo River's watershed and is 59 acres in size. The lake is undeveloped, except for one private landowner, and provides a scenic and natural shoreline. Baker Lake has a maximum depth of 26 feet and is characterized as a warm and eutrophic (productive) lake. During the 2012 MDNR survey of Baker Lake (Barry County), a total of 1,330 fish representing 15 species were caught. Bluegill were the most frequently collected species with a total of 977 caught, representing 73.5% of the catch. The bluegill ranged from one to eight inches in size. The main predators in the lake were largemouth bass (from 1 to 17 inches in length and spotted gar (from 10 to 31 inches in length). Other gamefish species captured included black crappie, hybrid sunfish, pumpkinseed sunfish, and yellow perch. Other nongame species collected in the survey included bowfin, brown bullhead, brook silverside, blackstripe topminnow, golden shiner, grass pickerel, lake chubsucker, warmouth, and yellow bullhead. Spotted gar, lake chubsucker, and grass pickerel are listed as species of greatest conservation need in the State of Michigan's Wildlife Action Plan. Listed species consist of only a few populations statewide or have exhibited declines in distribution and abundance over the past fifty years. A total of 62 turtles were also sampled including snapping turtle, common musk turtle, common map turtle, and painted turtle.

Grand River Walleye Assessment

The Grand River, which is one of the largest rivers in Michigan, is stocked every other year with approximately 2.6 million walleye fry from Eaton County downstream to Ottawa County. These fry are small at only 0.12 inches compared to the spring fingerlings at 1.3 inches that are typically stocked throughout the state. Fry stocking has been successful in turbid river systems and helps free up spring fingerlings for other stocking sites. To assess the stocking program, Grand River was surveyed with a boomshocking boat in March of 2012 at Eaton Rapids, Lyons, and Grand Rapids. Each site was surveyed for 0.5 to 0.9 hours. A total of 39 walleye were sampled at Eaton Rapids with a length range of 17-22 inches. Lyons produced 70 walleye from 9 to 27 inches, and Grand Rapids yielded 111 walleye from 14 to 32 inches. The results show multiple year classes of walleye in the Grand River indicating decent fry survival and possible natural reproduction in the system. The large walleye in Grand Rapids are from mature adults coming up from Lake Michigan to spawn.



Morrison Lake—Branch County

This lake was surveyed to assess the current fish community and to contribute data to the Fisheries Division statewide Status and Trends database for lakes. A total of 1,715 bluegill were sampled, representing 69% of the catch. Bluegills ranged in size from 1 to 8 inches with 61% above the angler preferred size of 6 inches. Largemouth bass ranged from 3 to 17 inches in length and were the most abundant predator in the catch at 125. Fifteen northern pike were captured ranging from 20 to 37 inches in length. Other gamefish reported included: black crappie, hybrid sunfish, pumpkinseed sunfish, rock bass, redear sunfish, and yellow perch. Nongame species caught included: bluntnose minnow, bowfin, brown bullhead, brook silverside, common carp, golden shiner, green sunfish, lake chubsucker, logperch, spotted gar, warmouth, and yellow bullhead.

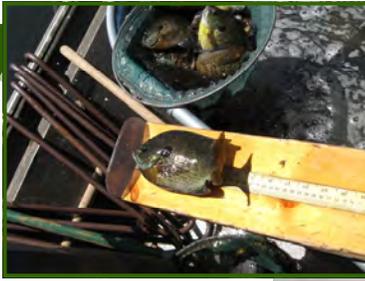
Rare Species



Spotted Gar

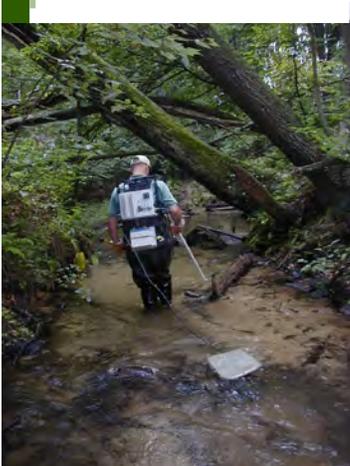


Lake Chubsucker



Links to our most recent Status of the Fishery Reports;

- Indian Lake, Kalamazoo County: http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/2011-120_359222_7.pdf
- Kalamazoo River, Kalamazoo County: http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/KzooRiverLkSturgeonRehabPlan_395540_7.pdf
- Clear Lake, St. Joseph County: http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/2010-104_334855_7.pdf
- Long Lake (Colon Twp), St. Joseph County: http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/2012-138_397812_7.pdf
- Long Lake (Fabius Twp), St. Joseph County: http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/2010-105_337525_7.pdf
- Palmer Lake, St. Joseph County: http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/2012-139_396265_7.pdf
- Shafer Lake, Van Buren County: http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/2011-115_351341_7.pdf

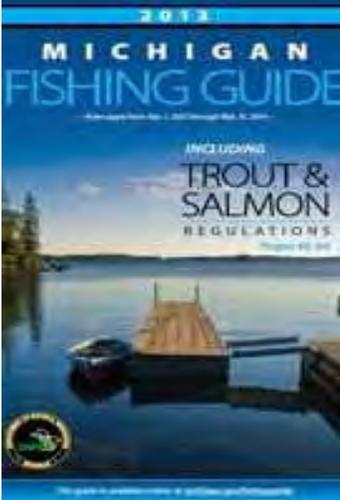


Interested in Learning More about Fisheries Division?

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

Where you Can:

- Read our 2013-2017 Strategic Plan.
- Read our 2012 Annual Report.
- Buy a fishing license.
- Read or sign up to receive weekly fishing reports.
- Subscribe to email updates on a variety of topics.



Did you know?

The male bowfin, also known as "dogfish" provides the parental protection.



Bowfin from Campbell Lake (Kalamazoo County)

Southwest Michigan State Records



Bryan DeGoede arrowed this 37.4 pound black buffalo out of the Kalamazoo River in Allegan County.

A 49.8 pound flathead catfish was also caught on the St. Joseph River in Berrien County by Rodney Akey.



Where Do We Stock Fish?

The SLMMU works closely with our hatcheries to stock fish in the nearshore 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.



