

Saginaw Bay Fisheries Management Framework and Status

Presentation to the Natural Resource Commission October 14, 2021


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Background on Fisheries Management in Saginaw Bay



 **STATE OF MICHIGAN**
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
Number 29 August 2004

Strategy and Options for Completing the Recovery of Walleye in Saginaw Bay, Lake Huron

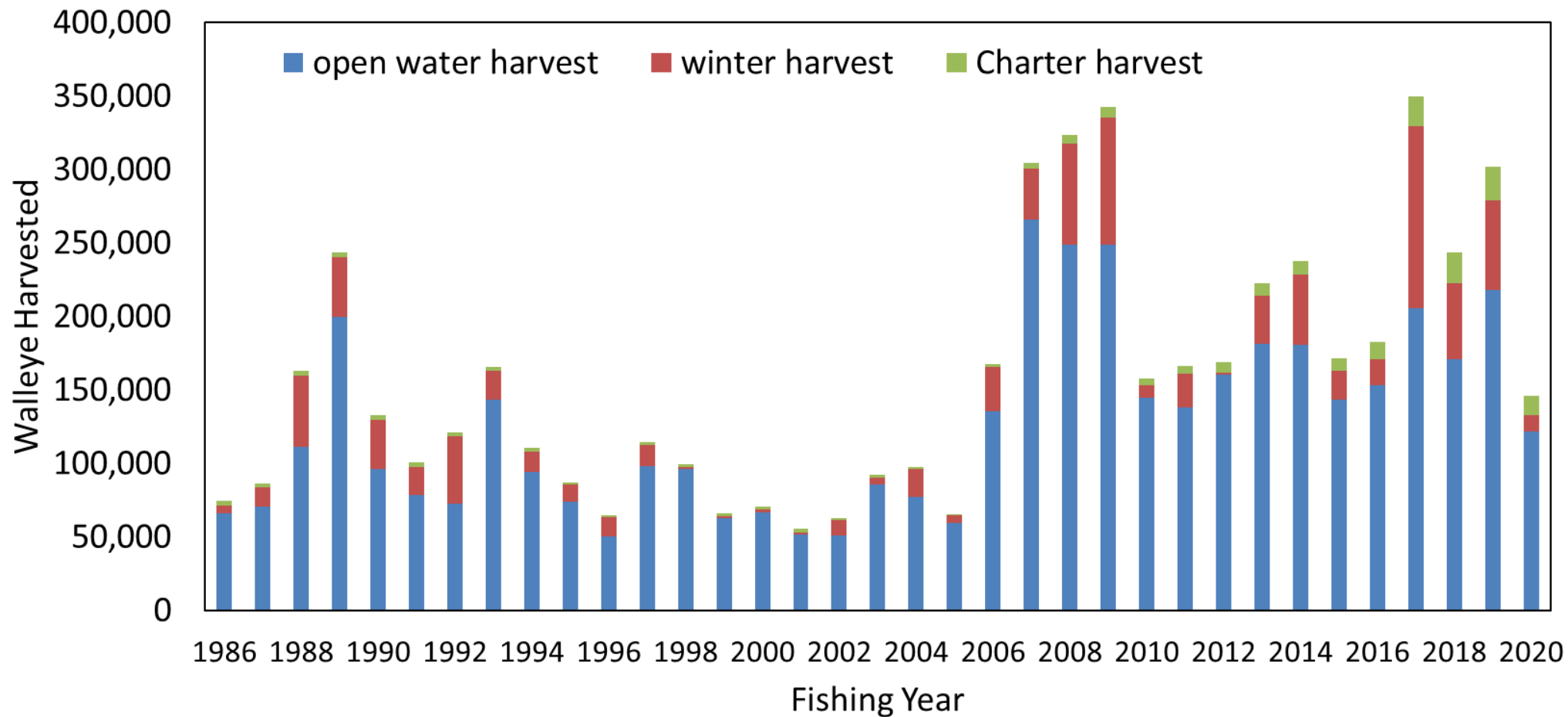
David G. Fielder
and
James P. Baker


NASA Photo

www.michigan.gov/dnr **FISHERIES DIVISION**
SPECIAL REPORT

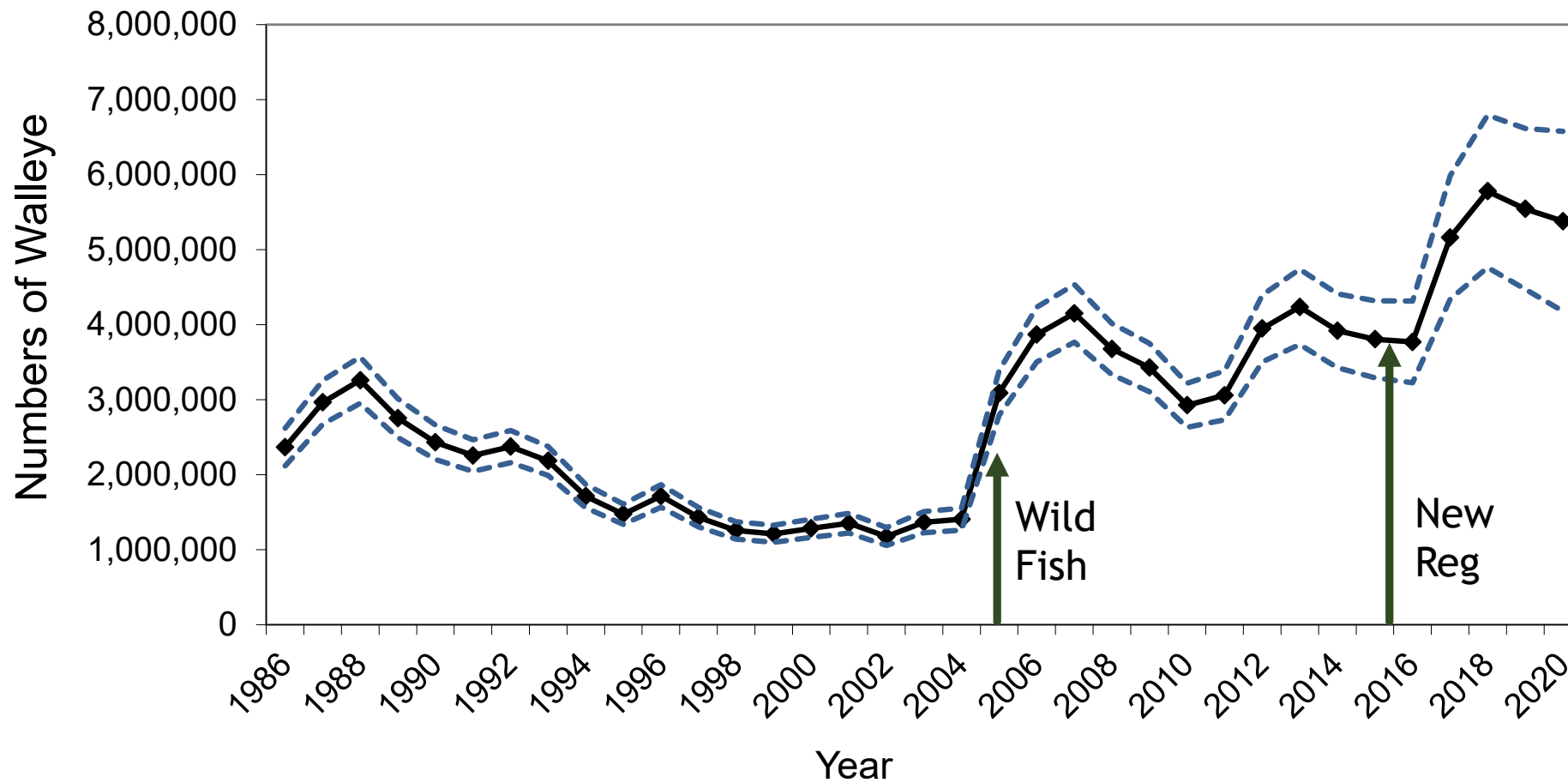


Trends in Walleye Angler Harvest





Walleye Abundance



Recent Management Approaches

- ▶ Several management actions taken in 2015 including:
 - ▶ Reducing yellow perch bag limit
 - ▶ Reintroduction of cisco
 - ▶ Shifting commercial fishing licenses
 - ▶ Liberalizing walleye (8 fish, 13" MSL)
 - ▶ Coreyon Reef Restoration
- ▶ Tenets of the walleye regulation
 - ▶ To better balance walleye recovery with prey fish and yellow perch populations
 - ▶ Increase harvest opportunities
 - ▶ Ability to scale back easily if needed

NOTE 3 - Walleye:

- **L. Huron waters of MH-4 (see p. 20) including Saginaw Bay and Saginaw R. upstream to Center St. (Douglas G. Schenk) Bridge:** The daily possession limit for walleye is 8 with a 13" minimum size limit. Any changes will be announced on the DNR website (Michigan.gov/Fishing) and in a pre-recorded message at 888-367-7060.





Current Management Issues

1. If walleye abundance remains high, can we **increase angler opportunity** further by opening portions of the Saginaw River during the spawning closure?
2. If walleye abundance is declining, should we **reduce the fishing pressure** and if so, by how much (e.g., decrease possession limit or increase size limit)?
3. How can we **streamline the regulation process** so that walleye trends and population model output (available in June) can inform regulatory changes the following year?



Stakeholder Input

Purpose is to develop an angler-driven vision for the Saginaw Basin (bay and rivers) walleye and yellow perch recreational fishery to incorporate into DNR management processes and decisions.

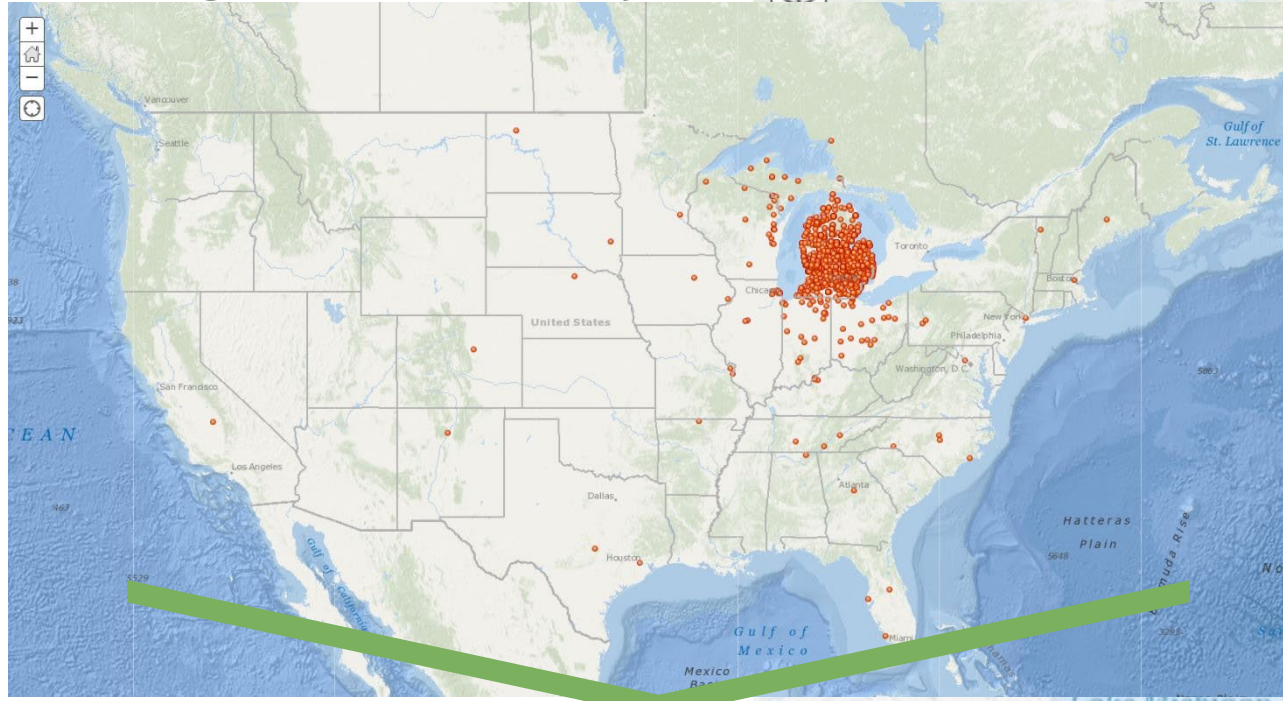


SAGINAW BAY WALLEYE AND YELLOW PERCH WORKGROUP

AUGUST 2021 UPDATE
PRESENTATION LINK: <https://bit.ly/3jmsH8X>

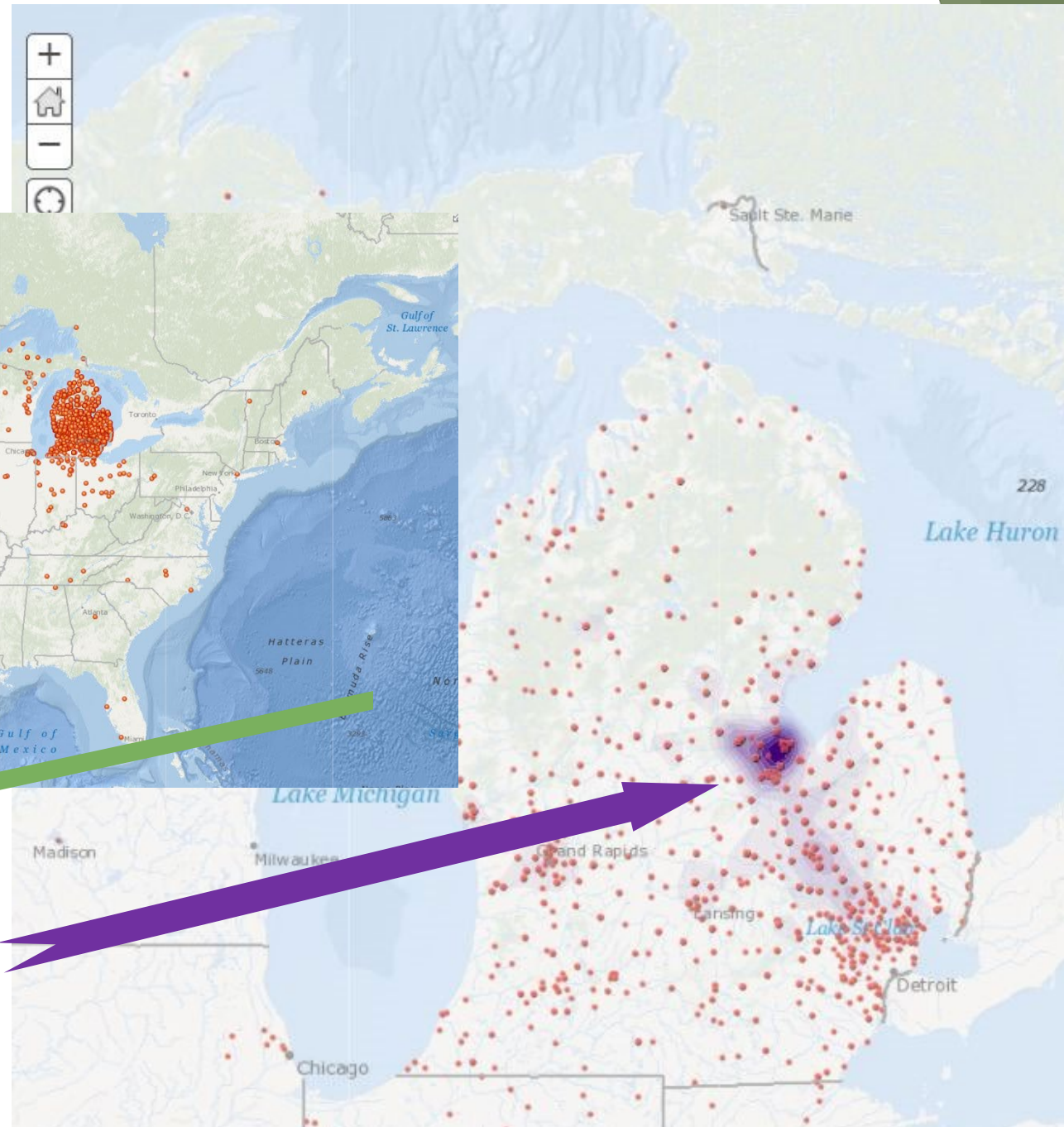


Saginaw Bay Angler Survey

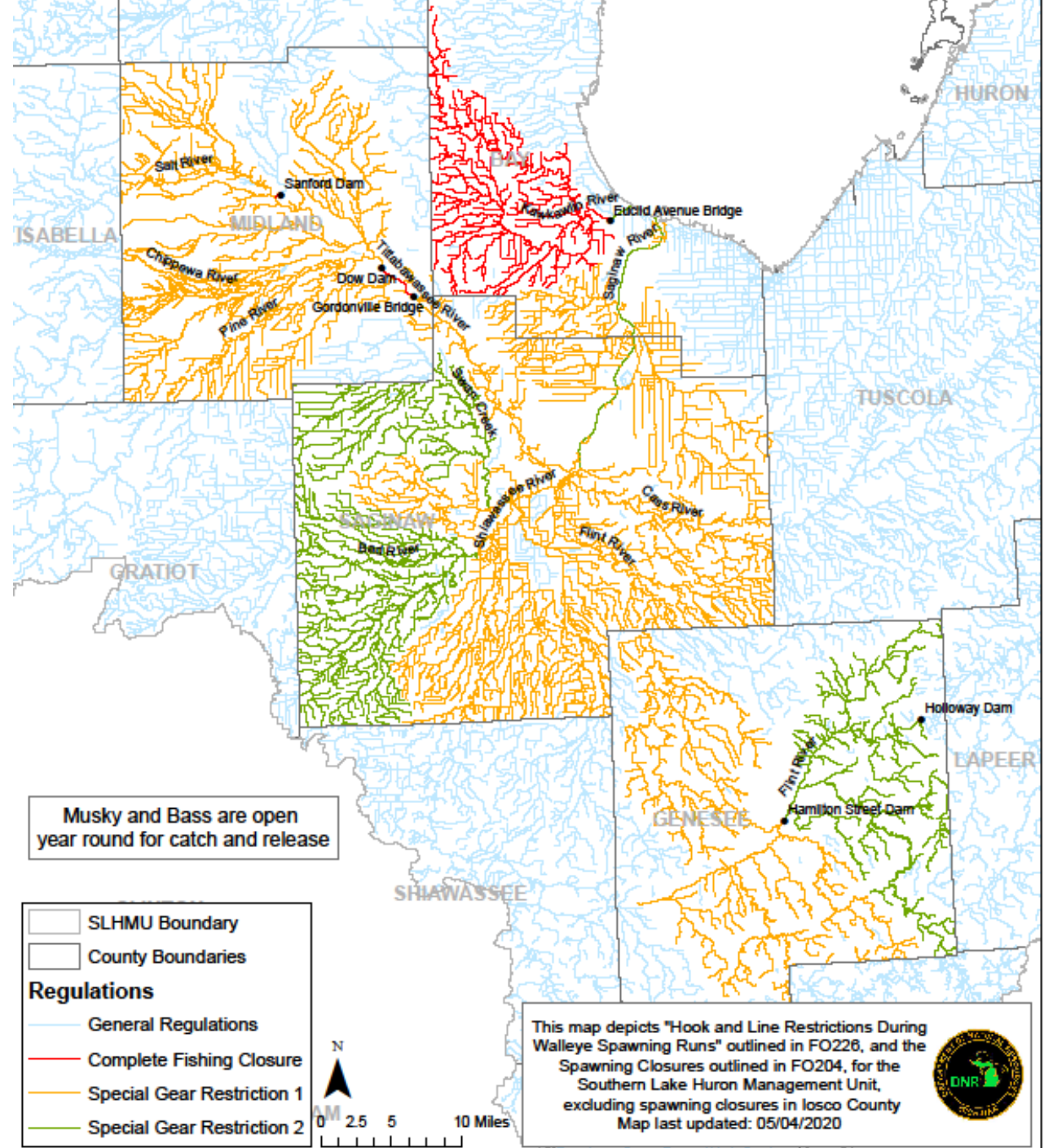
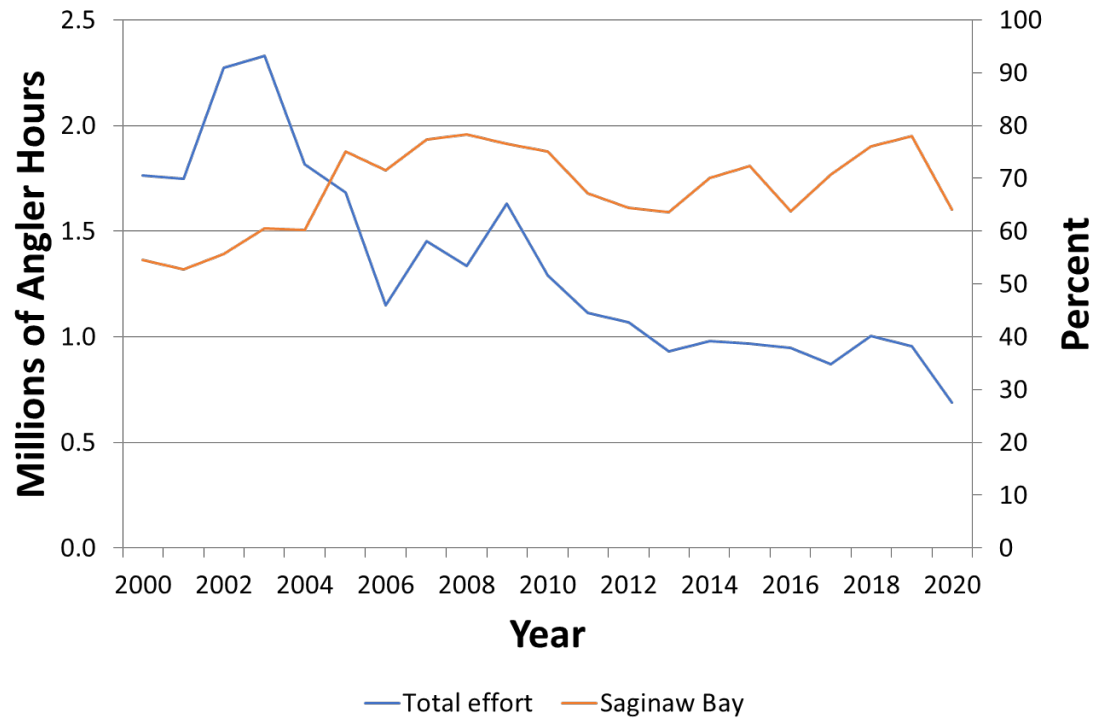


National Participation

Saginaw Bay Anglers targeting YEP & WAE more regionally

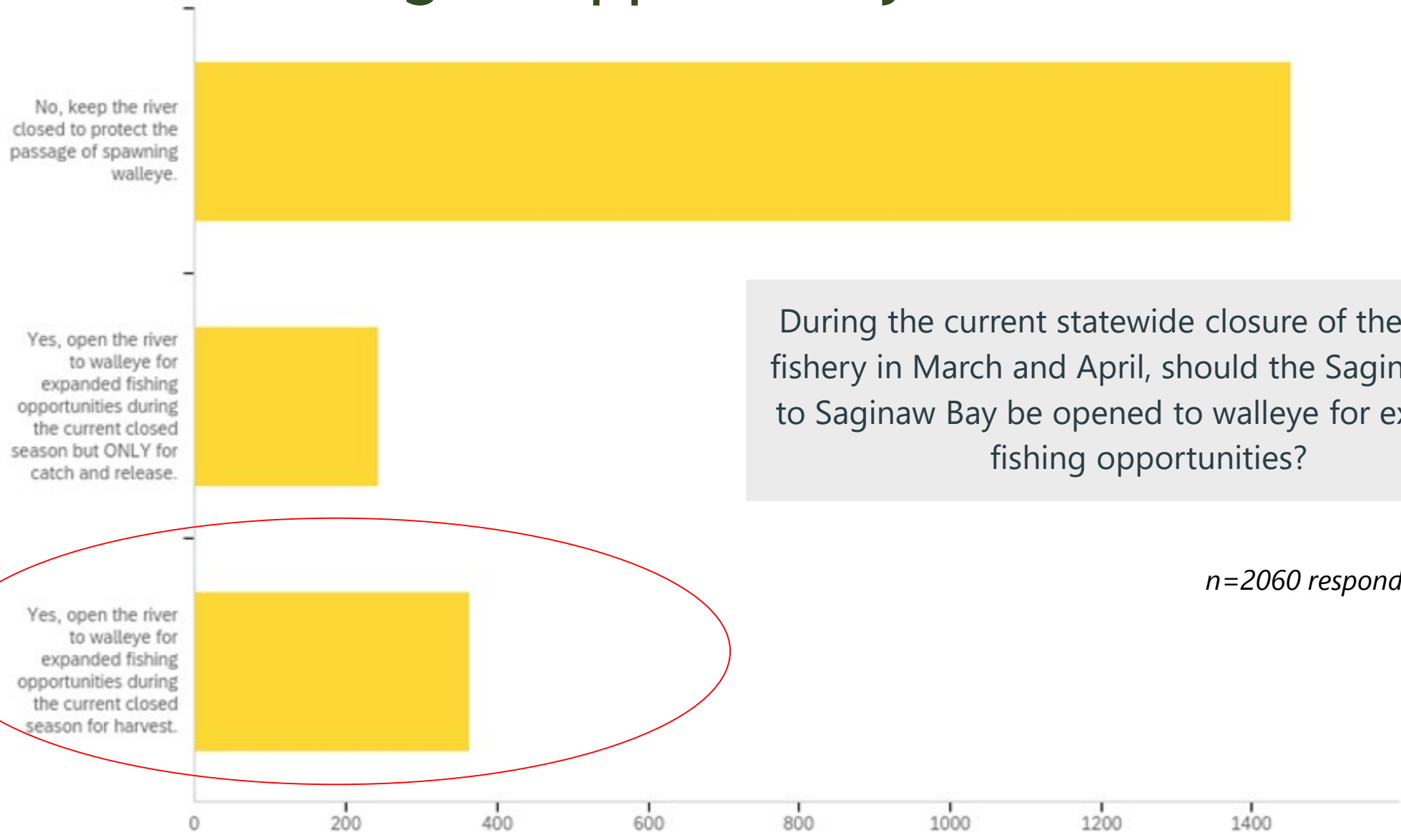


Increase Angler Opportunity?





Increase Angler Opportunity?



During the current statewide closure of the walleye fishery in March and April, should the Saginaw River to Saginaw Bay be opened to walleye for expanded fishing opportunities?

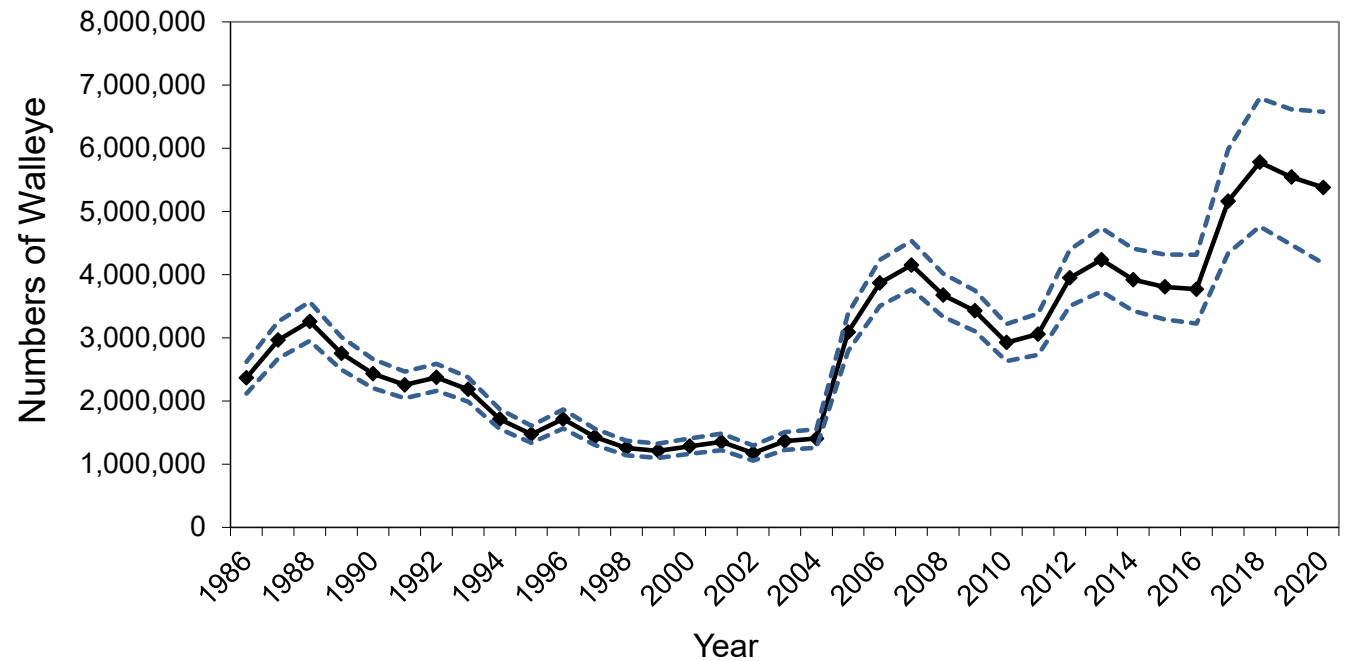
n=2060 respondents





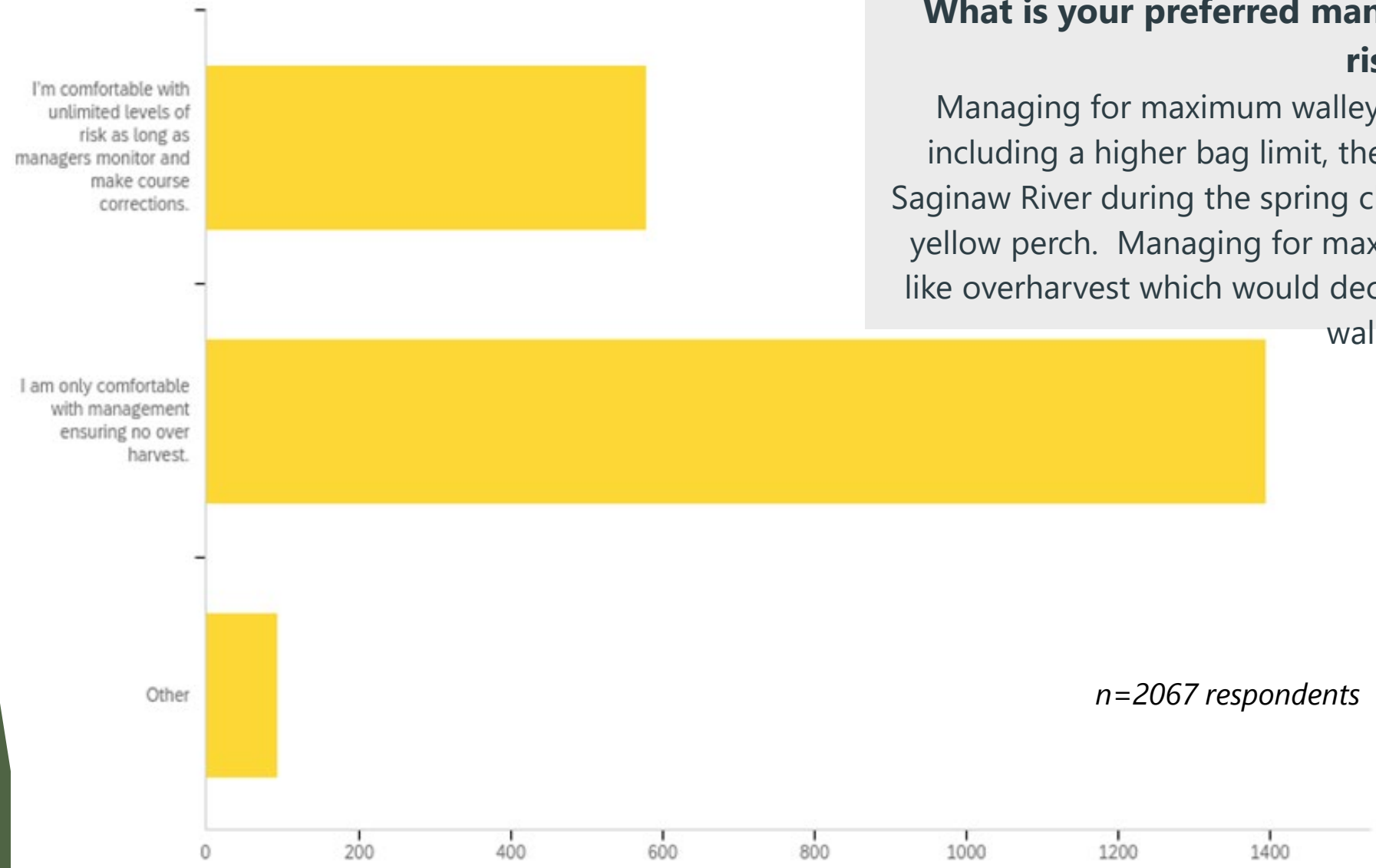
Reduce Fishing Pressure?

- ▶ What options should be considered for walleye in Saginaw Bay?
 - ▶ 8 fish and 13" MSL (current regulation; >5.5mil?)
 - ▶ 7 fish and 13" MSL; 4-5.5mil?
 - ▶ 6 fish and 13"; 2.5-4mil?
 - ▶ 5 & 15" (Statewide default walleye regulation); <2.5 mil?
 - ▶ Others





Reduce Fishing Pressure?



What is your preferred management style in relation to risk?

Managing for maximum walleye harvest has potential benefits including a higher bag limit, the ability to harvest walleye in the Saginaw River during the spring closure and decreased predation on yellow perch. Managing for maximum harvest might include risks like overharvest which would decrease the spawning population of walleye.

n=2067 respondents



Streamlined Regulation Process?

Year 1 (2021)

May/June: model updates and survey analysis

June/July: meeting between research and managers

August-April (2022): consultation with stakeholders

Year 2 (2022)

April 15: proposal to ASRA due

May/June: Multi-Divisional Fisheries Regulation Review Committee

June: Chief review

July: NRC review and decision

Fall/Winter: printing deadline

Year 3 (2023)

April 1: Regulation implemented



Streamlined Regulation Process?

May/June: model updates and survey analysis

June/July: meeting between research, managers, and Chief

August: consultation with stakeholders

Sept or October: NRC review and decision

Fall/Winter: printing deadline

April 1 (following year):
Regulation implemented

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Regulation
implemented
one year earlier.



A photograph of a sunset over a body of water. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright orange glow and a reflection on the water. In the foreground, a curved structure, possibly a boat's railing or a pier, is visible against the sky. The sky is filled with soft, white clouds.

Acknowledgements

- Dave Fielder
- Andrew Briggs
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- AFRS staff
- LSCFR staff

