



MICHIGAN STEELHEADERS THUMB CHAPTER

ISSUED QUARTERLY THROUGHOUT THE WATERSPORT COMMUNITIES OF MICHIGAN'S "THUMB"

President's Message

January, 2011

Greetings From the Wheelhouse

In every President's Letter I have had some choice words about my friend Mother Nature. I don't want to get her riled up because I think she is perched in a tree on the other side of my driveway directing the wind to dump all of the snow it can muster in to my drive.

Over the months prior to the publishing of the news letter, I try to accumulate information that I could pass on to the Thumb Chapter members. I am always looking for something positive. In preparation for this letter, I reviewed the information that I took away from the MSSFA board and president's meeting in Lansing on January 22, 2011. I reviewed the budget as presented, my notes and all of the handouts at the meeting trying to find anything positive to pass on. Lo and behold I came up empty handed. I called another individual that was at the meeting and ask him to help me to identify something that was positive, some program or project that was designed to help improve the Lake Huron fishery or make life easier at the chapter level. Maybe the only thing positive was that the food was good.

One of the major discussions was pertaining to the need to improve the image of the Steelheaders. "The MSSFA brand is forty years old and in need of a face lift." There was a logo presented that would replace the existing logo and supposedly improve the image of the Steelheaders. "It would be used to build a statewide identity for the Steelheaders." Without reading the verbiage when the proposed logo was unveiled, my first reaction was that it was a DNR seal or logo. This approach is typical from a sales or marketing individual that wants to change something just for the sake of changing it. Over the last 40 years in my working life, there were numerous companies, products; services etc. where the sales and marketing people wanted to improve the image by changing the label, logo or paint scheme to help increase sales. In almost all instances the image that had been identified in the market place was not changed. A prominent marketing consultant once told me that you can't improve the image of a product through a paint and decal change. If you put lipstick on a pig you still have a pig. The only way to improve its image is to clean it up, make it smell good and improve its quality and services in the society in which it presides.

When ever I travel and the weather permits, I wear my Steelheaders jacket and hat. Over the past few years I have been approached many times by people from the UP, to South Carolina, to Florida, Texas and areas in between, because they recognized the jacket. I wonder how many years it would take to have the new logo recognized as well.

The other aspects of the image change proposal would be the tremendous cost to both the state organization as well as each chapter. In my world this money and effort could be better used to improve the Lake Huron fishery and promoting tourism on the EAST side of Michigan.

The other major discussion was on "what MSSFA would need to do to help qualify the chapters so they could apply for a raffle license" Some of the requirements would be;

Change the MSSFA by-laws that would force each chapter to comply with the program

Oversight and control provided by the national or state organization over the financial affairs of the branch, lodge, or chapter, including the audit of the financial records of the branch, lodge or chapter.

Each chapter would have to have their taxes/books completed by a CPA

These are only a few of the requirements the chapters would have to abide by. As a part of the discussion, the MUCC could be used as the organization to provide oversight for each chapter to make sure the chapters comply. For their service the MUCC could require a fee of \$300 to \$400 and \$5 per member. This cost would not include other expenses such as the CPA. Just as an example as to what could happen, I belonged to a gun club that had a raffle for many years to help finance its operation. After the MUCC got involved the club had to abandon the raffle program, which put a tremendous burden on the organization. I haven't been able to put my finger on the motive behind this situation but it looks to me like the chapters are going to get the shaft.

It now appears official that the off shore challenge fishing tournament normally held in Port Austin will be coming back to Harbor Beach. I have been working with Mr. Ben Milo of the Can 2 Can and Mr. Larry Harwick of the Off Shore Challenge tournaments Both individuals have asked that the Steelheaders be involved in the operations of each tournament. Our responsibilities will be about the same in both cases. We will:

- Collect all entrance fee
- Distribute all prize moneys by check as directed by the tournament director.
- Pay other expenses by check as directed by the tournament directors.
- Provide a 1099 IRS form to all prize winners.
- Issue a 1096 to the IRS
- Check all boats before and after the tournament.
- Seal the coolers and help at the weigh in.
- Keep a financial record of all transactions.

For our efforts the Steelheaders will;

- Receive off the top 10% of the entrance fees
- Be able to run a 50/50 Raffle the day of the tournaments and retain the proceeds

continued on page 2

President's Message (cont.)

There is also a possibility that we will be able to set up a booth and sell our pig roast raffle tickets and try to get new members. We the Steelheaders will not be responsible for establishing or enforcing tournament rules nor will we be obligated for any guarantees of prizes, legal and financial aspects of the tournaments. All details will be finalized in a meeting on February 1st, 2011.

How about that! Something positive!

Stay warm. Spring is just around the corner.

Your Prez,

DNR and Legislative Report

15,000 CWT Michigan steelhead will be for our net pens and will arrive on May 17, 2011 and will be acclimated for 2 weeks and released on May 31, 2011, along with another 15,000 CWT Michigan steelhead from the hatchery. Each group will have their own CWT and fin clip. This means that in the next several years all steelhead with fin clips must be kept and the head saved for identification. This a five year project starting in 2011. The 2010 project showed that Michigan steelhead can successfully raised in net pens.

The catch rate for steelhead in Lake Huron for 2010 was 93% higher than 2000-2009. No one has an explanation for the marked increase. Steelhead plants have not changed over the last 10 years. Southern Lake Huron shows the largest increase. The hope is that this is not a one year flash in the pan.

The Chinook plant will remain the same for Lake Huron for 2011. The Lake Huron Citizens Advisory insisted that the 5 years study plan ended in 2010 and are expecting the research to be ready by the summer meeting so changes can be made. The tetracycline stain backbone studies showed that 85% of the Chinook caught in Lake Huron are nature reproduction .

The suggestion is not to plant Chinook smolt south of Rockport. Save the money and use it to plant more steelhead and Atlantic salmon. The forage is there to accommodate the fish.

The brown trout plant will remain the same the next 5 years.

Bad news is that no Atlantic salmon eggs were gotten from Lake Superior State College Aquaculture center. There were surplus eggs available for the MDNR.

There are over 200,000 herring at Wolf Lake Hatchery for 2011; lets hope they get more than 35,000 to plant out this year.

The DNR 2011 budget has been cut again this year by 6 million dollars. Early retirement has left many holes in the fish division personnel and only a few will be replaced. Jim Johnson will be running the Alpena and Lake St. Clare Research Stations.

Special note the thumb wolverine mount will be on display at the Bay City State Park Visitor Center some time in March. They will be the first to display her as it is the closest to where she lived.

The March 17th 2011 program will be Larry Deslover MDNR Law Enforcement.

Stay warm
Ken Merckel

ADIRONDACK FISH CHOWDER

Step one ingredients

6 slices bacon diced
1/2 cup chopped onions
1/2 cup chopped celery
1/2 bag baby carrots, cut bite size
1 1/2 cups diced potatoes
1 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
1 teaspoon old bay seasoning
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 to 1 teaspoon ground blk pepper
1 teaspoon parsley
2 bay leaves
1/2 teaspoon thyme
1/2 teaspoon dried dill weed
1/2 stick butter
1 cup chicken broth

Step two ingredients

1 cup grated Parmesan cheese
1/4 cup flour
1 teaspoon cornstarch
1 to 2 lbs of fish fillets, cut into 1-inch pieces.
1 quart milk
1 15 oz. can creamed corn
1 12 oz. package cream cheese

COOKING STEPS

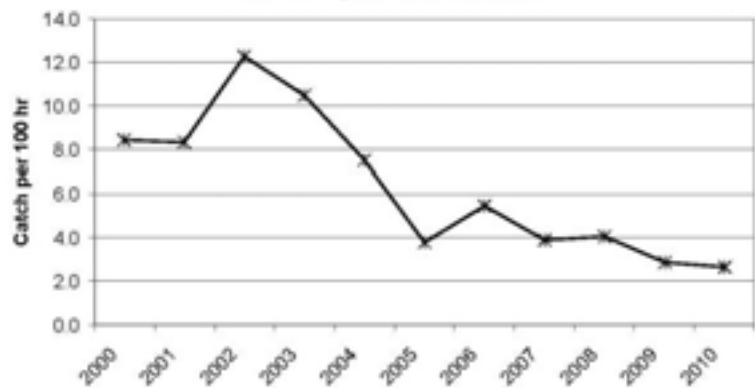
#1 Sauté bacon, then add butter, onion, broth, celery, and garlic powder & cook until onions, carrots, and celery are tender. Stir in potatoes and spices.

#2 Bring to a boil, and reduce heat. Cover , and simmer 20 minutes or until potatoes are tender

#3 Stir in fish, milk, and creamed corn, flour, cornstarch, Parmesan cheese and cream cheese. Cook on medium, stirring frequently until heated through and cream cheese is melted.

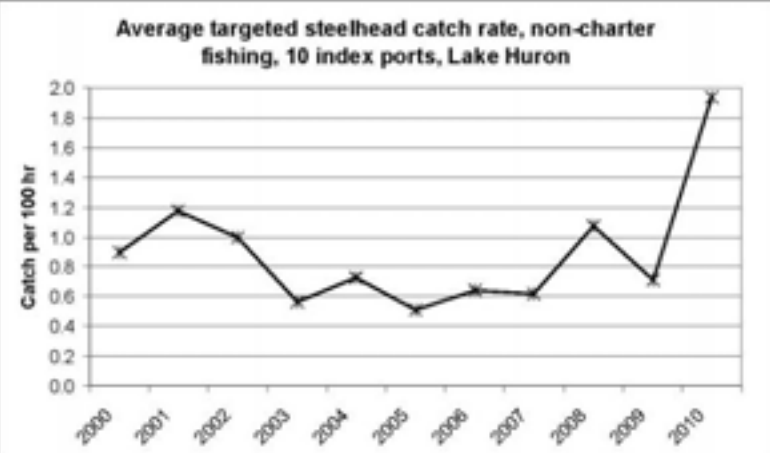
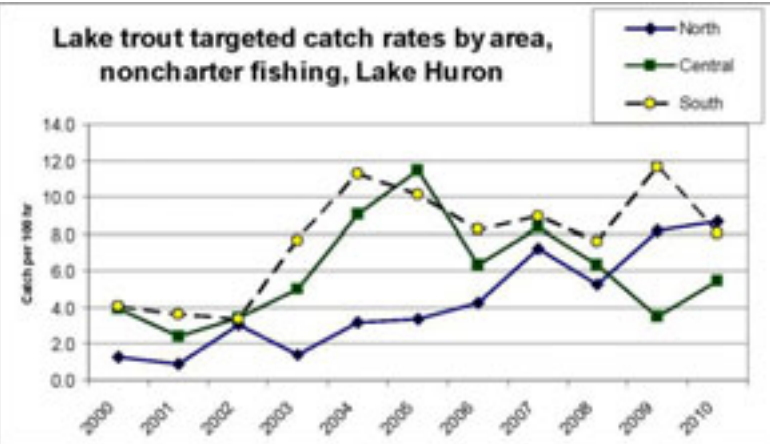
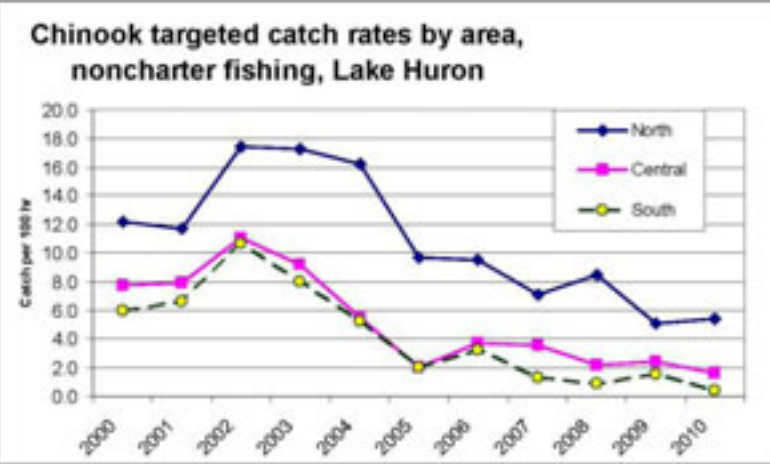
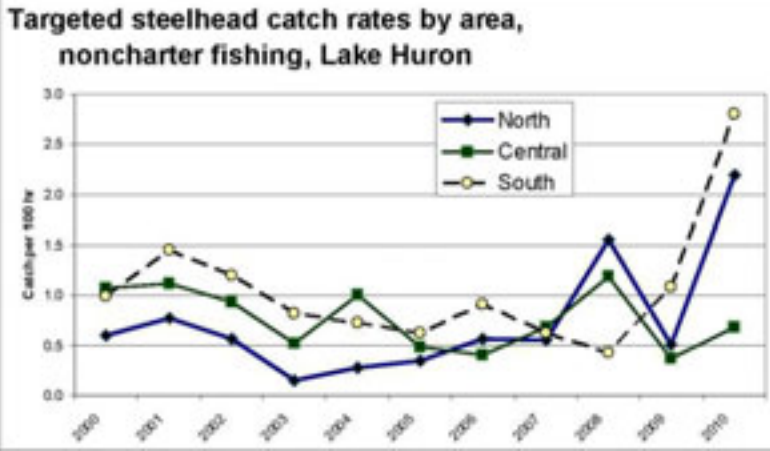
#4 Serve steaming hot with oyster crackers and your choice of beverage

Average targeted Chinook catch rate, non-charter fishing,
10 index ports, Lake Huron



Targeted salmonid catch rates

January 14, 2011



The recreational catch rates shown in my presentation to the Advisory Committee on January 12 were based upon all anglers interviewed and all hours fished. In other words, anglers fishing for walleyes were combined with those fishing for trout and salmon when I presented catch rates for steelhead, Chinook, and lake trout. I indicated at that time that Tracy Kolb and I were working on a summary of targeted catch rates. Targeted means the catch rates for trout and salmon would be based ONLY upon those anglers who told the creel survey attendant that they were fishing for trout and salmon. The walleye, perch, and bass anglers have been weeded out. Here are the results.

You will notice that rather than recovering to pre-alewife collapse days, targeted steelhead catch rates in 2010 were actually much higher than the pre-alewife years. They were in fact 93% higher than the highest catch rate seen from 2000-2009. But to put things in perspective, Chinook used to produce an average catch rate of 12 fish per 100 hours, and the 2010 steelhead catch rate, though on the rise, was still less than 2 fish per 100 hours lakewide.

Rather than declining slightly in recent years (as reported to the Committee Jan. 12), lake trout catch rates remained quite high through 2010. Lake trout fishing is improving steadily in the north and declining at the central ports.

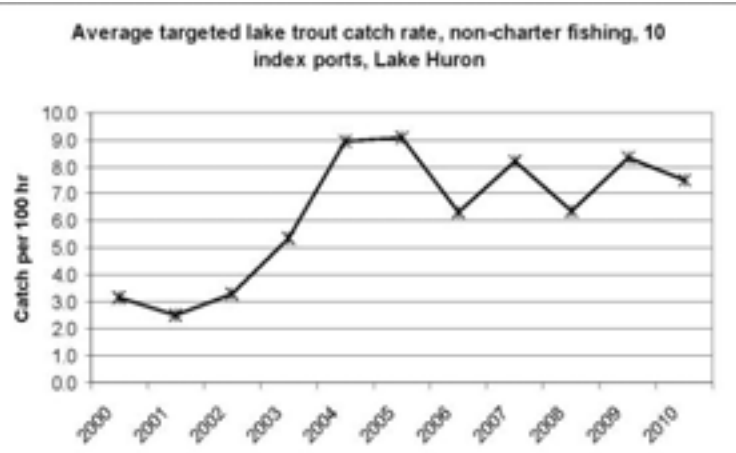
This analysis improves Chinook catch rates, but unfortunately they do not improve enough to be noticeable in these graphics. South of Alpena there was an average of 142 hours of targeted trout/salmon fishing per salmon landed in 2010 - and over 80% of those salmon were wild.

I want to remind the committee members that the rise in steelhead harvest rates could be a flash in the pan, so to speak. I do not put a great deal of faith in a one-year phenomenon. The magnitude of the rise, and the fact that it was measured at both the northern ports and southern ports of Lake Huron, is encouraging. If the rise is sustained in 2011, we can start to take this very seriously. The CWT-marked fish being released in

2011 should be useful in helping us to understand why this rise - if it's for real - is occurring. Scale analysis of the fish sampled by creel staff in 2010 will also potentially identify whether natural reproduction contributed to the rise.

Keep your fingers crossed.

Jim Johnson



DNRE Returning Walleye Fry Production to Historic Levels

Dec. 14, 2010

The Department of Natural Resources and Environment has begun gearing up to return hatchery production of walleyes to historic levels.

The DNRE plans to take some 50 million eggs this spring to produce fry for pond-rearing and direct stocking, an eight-fold increase over the last two years.

Since 2006, the DNRE has cut back on most of its walleye rearing activities because of the presence of Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia (VHS) in the brood-stock waters. Now, after several years of testing, a technique has been found to disinfect walleye eggs and prevent spreading VHS. As a result, the DNRE will now resume large-scale rearing and stocking of walleyes.

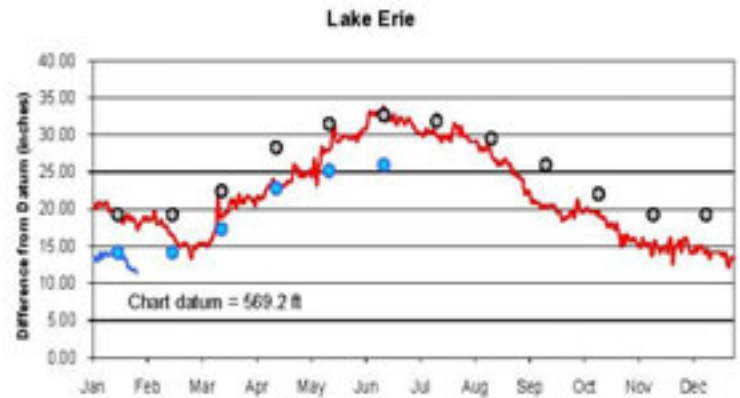
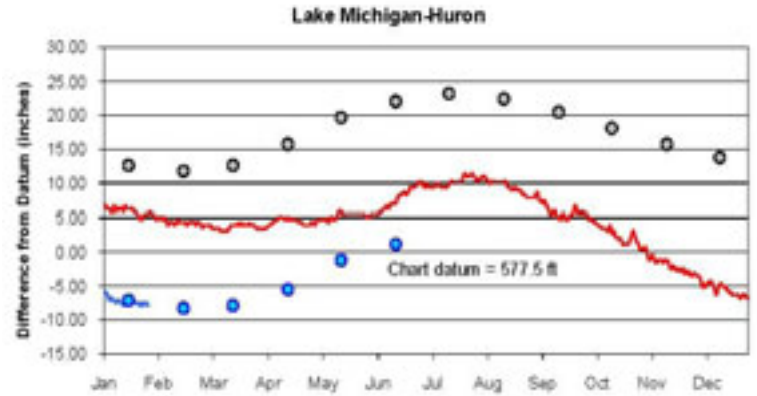
"In a perfect world, we wouldn't have cut our walleye fry production," DNRE Director Rebecca Humphries said. "But the specter of bringing VHS into our hatchery system or transferring VHS to new waters was just too risky. The ecosystem is constantly changing and our management practices must change with it. We are pleased that an effective treatment for walleye eggs against VHS has been found and we're ramping up our production accordingly."

The DNRE expects it to take two years to return to full production of walleye fry. A number of the rearing ponds, which have been idled for the last several years, are in need of maintenance before they can be brought back on line for production.

Nonetheless, the DNRE expects to produce at least 80 percent of the total capacity for walleye fry in 2011 and be back to full production in 2012. For more information, visit www.michigan.gov/fishing.

The Department of Natural Resources and Environment is committed to the conservation, protection, management, and accessible use and enjoyment of the state's environment, natural resources, and related economic interests for current and future generations. Learn more at www.michigan.gov/dnre.

Lake Level Forecasts



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MICHIGAN STEELHEADERS

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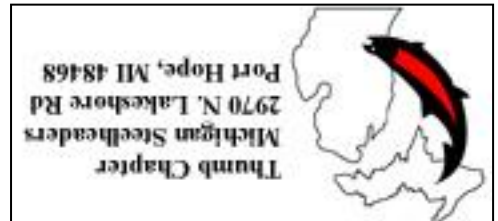


Taken at the Can2Can Tourney



June, 2010

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Meetings are held the 3rd Thursday of the month at the Ugly Fox Hunters Club on M-19, two miles south of M-142. Board of Directors meet @ 6:30 PM and Regular meeting comes to order @ 7:30