

Steelheaders , Welcome to 2008. This is the Spring Boat and Fishing Show edition of the Great Lakes Sport Fishing News and I want to say thank you to all of our renewing members and also to our new members. The Michigan Steelhead and Salmon Fishermen's Association has been around for over 30 years and it is because of members like you that we are the largest and most influential fishing organization in the Great Lakes area.

The 2007 year was a pretty decent year as far as fishing was concerned if you fished on Lake Michigan, Lake Huron on the other hand was still a struggle, but there were some improvements' over the 2006 fishing season. The Walleye fishing on Saginaw Bay and lower Lake Huron seems to have been pretty good this year if you happened to be in the right place on the right day. Northern Lake Huron had some pretty decent Salmon fishing as well from what I was told by others. Steelhead and Walleye fishing on Lake Erie was real good from what I have heard and I even got a chance to experience a great day of Lake Erie Walleye this past year when we limited out on nice fish in a couple of hours out of Toledo Beach Marina. The numbers of fish caught on Lake Mich. seem to have been real high again but the size seems to have been a bit smaller depending on who you talked to. We experienced good sized fish most of this year but we didn't catch any big fish, I think our largest fish was about 20 pounds with a lot of 16 to 19 pound fish as the average on a good day. We did mark a lot of bait this year, more so than last year but from what I hear it sounds like the trawl samples are showing smaller alewife populations again.

Another problem this year on Lake Michigan was the tribal nets out of the port of Manistee ,several trap nets were set and the area from south of the port to down around Big Sable Point was pretty well covered in the shallow water , fishing the deep water was not much of a problem. Some have told me the nets were well marked and others told me that they were not; I didn't get a chance to fish Manistee this year so I can't speak from first hand knowledge but I know it did cause a lot of heartburn for a lot of anglers. I have had a few anglers tell me that once they learned the layout of the nets that they fished around them and used them as structure to their advantage and fishing was real good. Several anglers told me that because of the nets they were not going to fish Manistee anymore and they were going to boycott the town but I hope that is not true, the only people that will be hurt by a boycott is the local merchants from the area , not the people responsible for the problems. MSSFA has been in close contact with the Manistee Area Charter Boat Association and the Manistee County Sport Fishing Association and they have established a dialog with the tribal fishermen and have been trying to work out some of the issues that came up in the area this past season, so far it has been a slow process but at least there is a dialog and it looks like maybe things will be a little better this next season. I guess we'll have to wait and see and I'll keep everyone posted on any thing that comes up related to the Tribal netting.

Some recent news about the long debated license fee issue came out around the holidays; it seems that the state has been able to come up with some extra money for the Dept. of Natural Resources to avoid a cut in services with in the DN.R. I guess when all of the books were closed for 2007 Fiscal year that there was some extra money that hadn't been spent to roll over into the 2008 budget to help out and also there is supposed to be an increase in money coming from the general fund into the Fish and Game Fund. The Steelheaders officers and board of directors had listened to the reasons needed for a

license fee increase from several people with in and out of the DNR , held several and attended several meetings around the state and fought hard to try to achieve the support for the increase, at the dismay of several of our members. Well it seems that we may have jumped the gun a bit. I don't know quite what to say other than we thought we were doing what was best for the Fisheries of Mich. based on the info. at hand and as president of MSSFA I will take responsibility for the actions about the license fee increase , I still believe we need to be prepared to look at a possible license fee increase in future but more importantly we need to look to the long term on this issue. How do we fund the DNR over the long haul to avoid things like this from happening again? Do we look at a sales tax increase like Rep. Joel Sheltroun of West Branch is proposing , do we look at permanent funding from the State Legislature , do we look at incremental license fee increase's based on the cost of living , or do we just keep moving on and not worry about it until later? I think we do need to be proactive rather than reactive, just how we achieve that is still in question. One of the best things you can do though is to let your State Rep. from your area know how you feel and what you think should be done. Write letters make phone calls and send e-mails to them and be heard.

On a positive note, it seems that our Federal Govt. have OK'ed the funding of the electronic barrier to prevent the spread of the Asian Carp into the Great Lakes , that was due to a lot of contact from the constituents' of the region , such as call and letters. Also the Cormorant issue seems to be moving forward pretty well at present, that is also from the help of calls, letters and donations from you, keep up the good work. We need to keep pushing hard for ballast water reform to prevent the introduction of more exotic species to the region and further devastating our resources. If we all work together we can make a difference.

I also want to let everyone know that the Steelheaders have completed the purchase of this newspaper, the Great Lakes Sport Fishing News. This was a procedure that was started over 10 years ago and I am pleased to announce that we have finally completed all of the transaction. You really shouldn't notice much change in the paper as we move forward other than we hope to make even more improvements, Andy Pelt will still be involved with the advertisers, Deb French will still do the layout and getting the paper printed for us and the big change is that the paper will be now managed by our Communications Committee with guidance from our board of directors. I know the subject of the papers ownership has been brought up several times by some of our members over the past several years and I want to let everyone know where we are at on it. A problem that has arose though is that the U.S. Post Office has changed the way they sort bulk rate mail, the paper is sent bulk rate and that sorting process has delayed the mailing of the paper on several occasions as the paper seems to sit at a branch of the U.S.P.S. for a couple of weeks before they do get sorted manually and then mailed off. So the reason there may have been a delay in receiving your paper is a result of a change at the post office, not anything we have changed on our end. Please be patient as we think we have worked the problem out so they get sorted and mailed in a timely matter.

On a final note , if you are reading this paper because you picked it up at a recent Sport Fishing Show we thank you for attending , now we would ask you to think about joining the Steelheaders and becoming a valuable member to us and helping out with our great resource. Also, please walk around and take the time to say HI at our Steelheader booths at the shows. And don't forget to pick up the tackle and equipment you need as

well, you won't find any better selection or prices on this stuff than at the shows. If you are shopping for a new boat, same deal, boat show prices are the lowest you will find during the season and you can usually bargain a little bit more as well. Finally, there are a lot of seminars going on and this is the time to brush up on your technique and maybe learn some new things from fellow anglers. Hope to see you all at the shows and on the water this year. Be safe and have fun. You're MSSFA President, Rick B.