

Hi members, hope all is well with every one and that you are all catching fish. I have been out a couple of times this year , been pretty decent for us fishing for fun and practicing but we'll have to wait and see how the tournament season is for us when we get started , hopefully things will continue on the positive side. I have attended a couple of meetings in the past month and talked to several people about the state of our fishery , seems like there is a little bit of positive news from Lake Huron as there are a few Chinooks being caught and they seem to be healthier than last year , lets hope it continues. Also have heard there is a little more bait being seen than last year. Lake Mich. news seems to remain pretty good as well, trawl samples from last year show the bait numbers about the same, not a big decline which is what we were worried about, looks like the mild winter may have helped with the alewife YOY survival .We will have to wait for the final numbers to come in though and I'll update you on them as soon as we know. Also being told that we have several good year classes of alewife and that should also help but again still too early to tell. We were also told that the dreaded Round Gobies has been found to be eating small Zebra Mussels and that Perch and Salmon have been eating on the Gobies. You can check out the trawl sample data and a lot of other good information at the Great Lakes Fishery Commission's web site, or at the Great Lakes Science Center's web site, and I also believe you can find the data at the Mich. DNR web site as well.

The fishing has been really good, depending on the day, with good numbers of Chinooks being caught all the way up the coast. We have been talking with the DNR and trying to get the Steelhead numbers bumped up a little bit around the state to help offset the reduction in the Chinook plants , we are also asking for some more brown trout. I was told that the DNR may be switching strains of Brown trout as well, looking for a better survival rate and larger fish that stay closer to where they are planted, looks like they are going to be dropping the Seaforellen strain, in favor of the Gilchrist strain and have a new strain that looks promising, I believe its called the Sturgeon River strain. I understand we have a couple of new net pen projects going this year also , both in Holland and in Saugatuck , good to see everyone working so well together.

Also have seen the creel census from last year , both charter and recreational numbers were up again for both ,with the top ports on Lake Mich. being spread out a little depending on species. The top ports seem to be Ludington, Grand Haven, St. Joe/ Benton Harbor and Manistee, with Frankfort, South Haven, and Saugatuck not being too far behind.

We did get some good news about the problem with the nets in the Alpena area during the Brown Trout Festival, it looks like the DNR is going to require the removal of the nets in the gray zone by June 1st and not allow them back in until Sept. 1st, hopefully that will help with the festivals success this year. There is still some work to be done to make this happen though and I'll pass on any info. I can to help the Thunder Bay Chapter get the word out and info. available to our other chapters to help lend a hand.

We at the state level are working on a couple of membership ideas, we haven't finalized them as of yet but we do have some nice donations sent to use to use to help as an incentive for joining the organization, I'll have a list of the donations and where they came from and all the details as soon as we get it all set up. And I do want to thank Larry and Gerri Hoort for taking over the membership committee at the state, they have worked real hard and have had great success at the Mid-Michigan Chapter, increasing their membership by over 100 members in the past year and we look forward to the same success at the state level. I also am proud to say that our past president, Jim VanderMass has been appointed to sit on the "Consent Decree Law Enforcement Committee Advisory Group" and represent MSSFA and the anglers of Michigan. Also, the Flint Chapter has finalized the paper work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and is now accepting donations towards the Cormorant control effort; keep this in mind as we move forward and please let every one else know about this as well, we all need to work on this and Flint has taken the lead here for us so lets do our part as well.

Well that's about all I have for now, we do have a lot of things coming up and a great summer ahead of us so "Be Safe" and enjoy the season.

Rick Balabon.