

This is our summer issue of Great Lakes Sport Fishing News and it sure has been a busy summer so far, lots of things going on and fishing has been pretty good around the state. I did get a chance to get out and Lake Erie a few weeks ago and do some walleye fishing with some real good friends of mine, boy what a fishery. We had our limit of walleye in just a couple of hours and they were all nice eating size, only had to put one back do to being undersize. If you are a walleye fisherman and you haven't been to Lake Erie lately then you are missing out on some great fishing. There has been some problems in the Manistee area this year with the Tribal nets that have been set there, I have heard from some members that there are nets all over the place and not marked very well, I have also heard from others that they are marked pretty good and the nets are very fishable, I haven't been on the water in Manistee yet this year so I'm going all on info. from others. I have had some conversation with the Manistee County Sport Fishing Association and the Manistee Charter Boat Association presidents about the issues they are seeing and we have offered our support and assistance to them to try to resolve the issues. They tell me they have a pretty good dialog going with the Tribal Fishermen and that they have agreed to remove the nets from the Barrel and possibly from a couple of other areas as well, they have some more meetings scheduled with the fishers, the D.N.R. and others as well and our tribal rep. from the Steelheaders will attend the meetings and try to offer some input from our membership. There have been some talks from some people about boycotting Manistee and some other actions. Everyone has to do what their conscious tells them to do but the one thing I would stress is that if people boycott the town of Manistee, it is the people and merchants of Manistee that will suffer and with the economic climate of the state, that could be a real blow to them. I would suggest to those of you that are thinking of not going to Manistee this year to please reconsider, talk to some of the local fishermen before you decide, you may have to fish a couple of new areas off from Manistee this year to avoid the net areas but I am being told that the port is very fishable and a lot of fish are being caught. Check out the Manistee Charter Boat Associations web site and others and get the locations of the nets before you head out, keep a pair of wire cutter available incase you do get hung up in a net (a good idea no matter where you fish), learn the layout of the nets from the Sea Grant web site and stay aware of your surroundings. The nets can actually be a pretty good place to fish at times as they do act as structure, the guys from the southern part of the lake fish the commercial nets all the time and do very well at it. Unfortunately the nets are probably not going away, the Tribal fishers are licensed to fish up to 48 nets in the area and entitled to do so by the 1836 treaty that was signed by the tribes and the Federal govt., I'll keep you posted as to any updates on the issue.

The State board of directors had Kelley Smith, Michigan Fisheries Chief, at one of our recent board meetings to explain to us the D.N.R. budget and how the money is allocated and spent. Some real eye opening information was given to us about the budget and how state govt. works. He explained that several areas within the D.N.R. rely on our hunting and fishing license fees to operate, such as law enforcement, legal, administration, public relations and several others. Without these depts. the D.N.R. would not be able to operate. He also explained to us that it is the State Legislature that appropriates the money for the dept. but if the funds are not there, they can not be spent and that by law the D.N.R. can not operate in a deficit. The State board of directors did discuss this at the meeting and has agreed to support a license fee increase of some sort but with some

reservations/restrictions. A couple of the concerns are that the State come up with a long term solution to the D.N.R. budget issue and most members are concerned with the youth license section on the bill that was recently introduced. Andy Pelt, our executive director will be attending these hearings with the Legislature to express the Steelheaders concerns with the bill. Speaking of the legislature and bills, there has been some movement of the cormorant bills in the house and it looks positive, the issue will probably come down to funding for the program. Don't forget the Flint Chapter has started a cormorant fund to collect money to go towards the research and control of cormorants, check out their web site for more info. as they can always use the support. I did see where the D.N.R. parks division has closed some state parks for the summer do to funding issues, I hope it don't carry over to the Wildlife and Fisheries depts.. as well. Kelley also discussed V.H.S. disease as well and the new restrictions on transporting and using live/dead bait in the state and what we as sportsmen can do to help, I recommend you check out the D.N.R. web site for more info. on the restrictions for your area as they are different depending on where you are at..

I did read an article from Van W. Snider Jr., President of the Michigan Boating Industries Association recently about a possible federal regulation regarding ballast water and how it may affect the recreational boater/fisherman as well. It seems that we may be required to obtain some kind of new permit that was designed for large ships and industry do to a recent ruling in U.S. District Court. Congresswoman Candice Miller and Rep. Gene Taylor have introduced a bill to save use from these new regulations but they need our support, please send a letter to your senator and representative and express your support of the Recreational Boating Act of 2007, I believe this is H.R. 2550.

I do want to mention that the Flint Chapter has started a Jr. Steelheader program in their chapter to try to get more youth involvement and they have been providing some great opportunities for our youth for the past couple of years with some kids fishing activities, the Thumb Chapter has been doing similar things as well and other chapters I know do a lot of youth activities, I would like to see if anyone would be interested in heading a committee up at the State level to work with these chapters and use our State Youth Steelheader program as a conduit to make these programs a success and promote youth fishing and outdoor activities around the state, possibly in cooperation with project FISH and others. Please let me know if you are interested or know some one who maybe interested, my e-mail address is < flatrate@educatedangler.com >

We are working on some possible changes to our web site as well at the state level and it will pretty exciting as we roll through with it, you will notice we have added a legislative action page, it is to inform our membership of things that are going on at the State Govt. level and get the info. out a little quicker to you. We are also adding a mass e-mail list, so when important items come up we can send an e-mail out to let everyone know what's going on right away, and let you know about upcoming events and meetings and so on, if you would like to get on the e-mail list, shoot me an e-mail and I will send it on to our webmaster, or you can contact our webmaster direct if you choose.

That's about all I have for now, I know there are a couple of more things I'd like to mention but I am running out of time and space so it will have to wait until next issue, please be safe out there and don't forget, lets try to take some one new fishing this year, I am surprised every day at the number of people I talk to that have never been fishing in their life. Rick Balabon, President / MSSFA