

Presidents Report from Rick Balabon , Summer 2007

Hope all our membership is having a great spring and start of summer fishing season, river, stream and lake. Remember we have some real nice fishing opportunities right here in Michigan. We have real good small mouth bass fishing all around the state, the walleye fishing is as better than it has been in a few years, the perch population has started making a strong come back around the state, inland lake fishing for pan fish is still a favorite for a lot of folks and of course our trout and salmon fishing is still a favorite for a lot of anglers. Don't miss the opportunity to get out and enjoy our Great Lake State.

Some news has come about from around the state in several areas, the recent introduction of a couple of bills that may impact our hunting and fishing license's are the first I will mention. House Bill 4624 and Senate Bill 0406 are the bills I am speaking of and the bills are currently in appropriations and waiting to be discussed. These bills would raise hunting and fishing license fees incrementally over the next few years to balance the D.N.R budget. Check out the info. and read up on the bills. You can find out more info. on them on the D.N.R. web site , the State Legislature web site or elsewhere here in the GLSFN and by asking your chapter rep. You can voice your thoughts on these bills to your chapter rep. and to your legislators by writing them or phoning them. We have had a meeting with Kelly Smith and Jim Dexter from the Mich. D.N.R. Fisheries Div. to discuss these bills at our June State Board meeting. Also there has been an attempt by a couple of Senators, Michael Prusi and Randy Richardville , to repeal the law affecting Ballast water in the Great Lakes . A new law went into effect Jan. of this year requiring ships entering the Great Lakes to have their ballast water treated and receive a permit from the DEQ , Senators Prusi and Richardville have introduced a bill to roll back the new permit system by one year , thus allowing ships to enter the area without ballast water treatment and with that opening the possibility of some more new exotics entering the Great Lakes Basin . Hopefully they will fail in their attempt to get the bill through but we will keep an eye on it and let everyone know more as we hear more. Another bill recently introduced has to do with Cormorant control, that is Senate bill number 354 sponsored by Michelle McManus. The bill would require the D.N.R to administer and manage a program to control the double-crested cormorant to reduce damage caused by the birds, the bill is tied House bill 4471 and that also is designed to control cormorants. As you can see a lot of action going on in Lansing related to some fishing issues. On a federal note , the U.S. House passed the Water Resources Act , HR 1495 to fund the Asian Carp barrier along with a couple of other projects , the bill is in the Senate awaiting action , hopefully that will come through with out much trouble.

I did see that the USDA Wildlife Services started oiling cormorant eggs at 482 nests near Ludington this month with plans to eliminate about 200 live birds, they are currently awaiting their federal funding to come through along with some matching state funds. The Flint Chapter of the Michigan Steelhead and Salmon Fisherman's Association has started a fund to help with the cormorant control around the state, please check out their web site and add your name to the list of contributors. The Ludington Charter Boat Association contributed 3500 dollars to the USDA for cormorant control last year as well

to help control these birds so let's get behind these fine groups and help them out by showing we care.

The early trawl samples of Lake Michigan looked like it would be decent but as the complete data has come in it looks like that alewives numbers are at an all time low, down about 26% from 2005, bloater and smelt were down as well between, 46% and 69%, but nine spine stickle back minnows and slimy sculpin were up, as were yellow perch and round goby. Overall the total lake wide biomass was down the lowest it has ever been since the trawls started in 1973 according to the Great Lakes Science Center. Not very good news but hopefully the reductions in Chinook plants will help bring the forage base numbers back up over the next couple of years. I did see that there were 531,000 trout and salmon caught in Lake Mich. last year overall, the 5th highest harvest over the past 20 years. I haven't seen the trawl or creel numbers for Lake Huron yet but just as soon as I do I will pass them on, although some of the early fishing reports that I have seen and heard of looks like there are a few more kings being caught this year than last, lets hope that holds out and our Lake Huron fishermen have a better season than last. Did just find out some good news for Lake Huron from Jim VanderMaas our Tribal Committee rep. , he had just finished a meeting with the Thunder Bay Chapter of the Mich. Steelheaders and the Tribal reps from the Bay Mills and Saulte Band about tribal netting in the disputed zone and the meeting went well with good dialogue and a permanent agreement that should work good for everyone. Jim will have more info. on this for us shortly.

We have been told that there will be no brown trout planted in South Haven or New Buffalo this year due to a shortage of viable eggs for the hatchery system, approx. a 50% reduction in brown trout eggs this year is what I have heard from our Lake Mich. Basin rep. , Joe Pilara.

I was also informed that there may be up to 5 tribal commercial fishing boats fishing out of Manistee this year. The Little River Band of the Ottawa Indians issued the permits to the tribal fishers and they will be fishing for whitefish and bloater chubs form as far south as Muskegon to near Frankfort. I'm told that they have licensed 4 net operations with up to 12 nets per license for a possible total of 48 nets. The Tribe held a meeting with members of the Manistee County Convention and Visitors Bureau, local Charter Captains and fishermen recently and there was discussion on improved net markings and posting of the net GPS coordinates to avoid confrontations and for safety reasons. As a matter of fact, there have been a couple of meetings so far and good dialogue but I know there is a lot of concern with the placement of the nets and I have been in contact with the presidents of the Manistee County Sport Fishing Association and the Manistee Area Charter Captains to find out how the talks are going and to offer the support of the Michigan Steelheaders and its members to help in any way we can. There have been talks of protesting and boycotting the area and tournaments but keep in mind that if we as fishermen don't go to Manistee, it's the merchants of the town that will suffer the most. So I would recommend that our members check out the Manistee Area web sites and find out the net location coordinates and either stay away from the immediate net areas or learn the layout of the nets and be careful fishing around them. But I wouldn't cancel my

plans on visiting Manistee , I know I'm planning on fishing the port this year as I have heard they are catching some real nice fish right now.

I do want to apologize to those who may not have received their Nov. / Dec. issue of GLSFN , some people got theirs and some didn't . It seems that with the holiday rush that the U.S. Postal Service lost several bundles of the paper and nobody seems to know where they went. They are investigating as to what happened so I will try to let everyone know more when I do. Deb will try to rerun some of the articles that was in the Nov./Dec. issue through out the summer.

And finally, I read an article recently that said fishing had surpassed basketball for number 1 in eye injuries, I didn't know basketball was hard on the eyes but that shows how much I know. Remember; wear your sun glasses to protect your eyes, both from U.V. exposure and from flying hooks and lures. Have a great summer.

Rick Balabon / President