

MSSFA Executive Director Report --- January 22, 2011

Executive Summary:

On November 22, 2010 I attended the MDNRE sponsored Asian Carp Workshop which brought together representatives from the Great Lakes surrounding states and the Province of Ontario. It also included representatives of the Army Corp of Engineers and federal appointees like John Goss who has been designated by President Obama as his Carp Czar. Conservation groups, tribal representatives, legislators and concerned citizen groups were well represented at the workshop. The key stakeholders were given an opportunity to present what progress has been made to date in preventing the carp from entering the Great Lakes ecosystem and the plans for a permanent ecological separation of the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River Basin. Federal government representatives painted a robust plan to effect change by 2013. The Army Corp of Engineers was not as confident that we would have a clear direction until 2015. The Great Lakes Commission and Chicago Area Waterway System people talked about short term measures but really don't have a plan for transforming their waste water diversion system, sewage overflow problem, or transportation structure should the permanent separation solution become reality. Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio and the Province of Ontario are far less prepared to deal with the arrival of Asian Carp than Michigan. Michigan used this workshop as a platform to unveil its comprehensive strategy to deal with Asian Carp if they arrive in the Great Lakes and rivers in southwest Michigan. The comprehensive strategy is posted on the MDNRE website.

Part of that strategy is early identification and MDNRE has produced a brochure that helps people identify these invasive species in their early life cycle stages. This is to protect our waterways from carp being mistakenly transported in bait buckets as chubs or shiners. These brochures will be handed out in communities along the most likely entry points for Asian Carp and to groups like MSSFA who will take the interest in educating members and the public alike about the seriousness of this potential problem.

The legal process to prevent the entry of Asian Carp is still active. Attorney General Bill Schuette called a meeting of environmental groups, fishery advocacy groups like MSSFA and MUCC to meet with him on January 11th. He wanted us to update him on the issues and the problems posed by Asian Carp. The National Wildlife Federation was especially helpful in explaining what needs to be done and I was able to give the AG an overview of how devastating this colonization threat would be to the \$7.1 billion fishing industry. The Attorney General then invited me to join him at a press conference he conducted on Thursday, January 13th to announce his commitment to continue the legal battle to shut down the Chicago locks. Dave Nyberg from MUCC and Patty Birkholz, the new Director of the Great Lakes also spoke at the press conference. (I will try to post the video of the conference on our website.)

I was pleased to be able to join the Grand Haven Steelheaders for their annual Christmas Dinner on December 2nd and the South Haven Steelheaders for their Christmas Banquet on December 11th. My remarks were brief but I did have a chance to answer questions and get to know a lot of members better. The Sea Grant Workshop was held in Ludington again this year on Jan. 8th and a separate report will be posted on the website to update everyone on what was covered in the six hour workshop.

The Lake Huron Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee met on January 12th and separate report will be posted on the website as well. The highlights include good news for steelhead fishers since catch rate is double what it was a year ago and walleye fishing has increased dramatically because of their come back and abundance. Yellow perch have made a serious come back also now that alewife have disappeared. Though they are reproducing well the 0 to 1 year olds are experiencing a 60 to 70% mortality rate due to walleye predation and fishermen hammering them when they find them. We can remain very optimistic about the fishery as its diversity right now is its strength.

The Great Lakes Sport Fishing News took center stage in latter November and December and in addition to calling on advertisers, I was able to contribute four articles that highlighted tournament fishing (Living the Dream), new product introductions (The Charge Box), the ED's report and a tribute to long time friend and irreplaceable voice of the Grand Rapids Steelheaders, Dave Nowicki.

Important work lies ahead as our Strategic Planning Committee reviews possible new initiatives including rebranding strategies, a major new member drive, a meeting with two members of Governor Snyder's staff to learn more about the ground rules going forward, and a meeting with Sen. Goeff Hansen, Chair, Senate Committee on Outdoor Recreation and Tourism on February 3rd.

It has been another exciting two months and I am hopeful we can continue to make MSSFA and GLSFN influential and impactful advocates for the future of steelhead and salmon fishing in the state of Michigan.

