



Newsletter of the Chippewa Ottawa Treaty Fishery Management Authority, 'Conserving for Future Generation's'

## NATIVE FISHERS LOSE VESSELS TO ARSON

By Jennifer Dale

BATCHEWANA BAY, Ontario — Fred Mearow borrowed throughout the winter to feed his expecting wife and five children, counting on spring fishing revenue to see him back on his feet. What the uninsured Batchewana First Nation fisher didn't count on was an act of vandalism that completely destroyed his fishing vessel and equipment.

"This comes at the worst time of the year," said Fred, his littlest girl asleep in his lap. "I've spent all my money. Food for my kids is my biggest concern."

In the early hours of March 25, three Native fishing vessels docked at the Lake Superior Provincial Park boat launch (near the Algoma petroglyphs) were ruined by arson, the motors destroyed by rifle shots and the ensuing fire. The local Crimestoppers has offered \$5,000 for information leading to an arrest, according to local television ads.

There are no suspects in the case. "Canadian firearm laws are much more restrictive than in the U.S. It's a serious act," said Batchewana Fisheries Coordinator Doug Belonga. "There is no speculation at this time. There are threats from all sorts in regards to commercial fishing activity, so until we get some feeling, we are reluctant to start speculating."

"The threat in the background is that this person or persons could do it again," added Belonga.

Fred Mearow and his brother Darrell Mearow are members of the Batchewana Bay First Nation of Ont., Canada, based in Sault Ste. Marie, Ont. They fish in Lake Superior off Whitefish Harbour for whitefish and incidental lake trout. For the past six years, they used the Algoma boat launch, leaving their vessels and gear on site.

Fred feels "very odd" about the crime. "It's totally shocking. Everyone local knows us. We meet people from all over the world," he said. Reporters calling for a story tried to talk him into a racist slant. But he won't say that — he has no idea who might have destroyed his property.

"The locals, the cabin owners ... we all know each other. There's been tension with anglers in general — but I've never been personally confronted." He's worked with commercial fishers, who also get harassed, but no one ever followed up on their threats, he added.

Darrell says those who did the crime are cowards. "What did we do wrong to deserve this? They could have come and talked to us, man to man. They were like drive by shooters," he said.

Fred's boat burned so hot its



Batchewana bay commercial fisher Fred Mearow grimly surveys damage to his 26-footer.

26-foot steel hull buckled and lead from the nets melted to puddle underneath the boat. The brothers figure Fred's boat burned so hot because of the fishing nets he'd left inside.

"There was 1,200 feet of net that got going and really burned," said Darrell.

All Fred's equipment was stowed on the boat. "I kept all my stuff up there — the parks don't mind as long as it's all tucked up and tidy," he said. "I thought we could trust everybody — we're not leaving our stuff up there again."

Fred's wife, Charlene, said that her husband's damages came to \$16,651, according to their tribal fisheries coordinator. "That was Fred's income last year, by coincidence," she said.

"It took me all this time to get my nice boat," added Fred. "Now, it's all gone." He has five children, ages 7,6,5,4, and 2, and one on the way. Fred and Charlene gave up a lot so that he could buy equipment.

Charlene would almost feel better if the equipment had been stolen. "Such disrespect hurts," she said.

Although Darrell was able to salvage most of his vessel, the motor was destroyed by rifle shot. Another fisher, Allen Djornaa, also lost his motor to rifle shots. His aluminum hull buckled in the extreme heat of Fred's vessel burning up.

Djornaa is now fishing with another vessel, in another location.

Belonga, who is coordinating with Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) out of Wawa, Ontario, and the local Crimestoppers unit, calls the crime premeditated. "The OPP's opinion is that the crime was a well-planned act of vandalism," said Belonga. "There is no suggestion that it was random. They used a rifle and brought their own gas."

A search of the scene turned up no shell casings, he confirmed.

OPP Constable Eric Keenan said the act was severe but not an

isolated incident. "It's a fairly isolated area and there has been vandalism and stolen parts reported in the area before," he told a local daily, *The Sault Star*, on March 27.

"The OPP and Crimestoppers have identified that this has higher priority and urgency than some other issues," said Belonga. "The park should be concerned that someone is running around in the park with guns and gasoline."

Belonga, who finds the crime "disturbing," said he's talked to some people who hate commercial fishing and nets, but find the act of arson even more distasteful.

"It's a cowardly act," he said.

The fisheries coordinator added he is working with investigative agencies, without toe-stepping, to ensure they fulfill their obligation. He is also working closely with the fishermen to help them cope.

"I'm keeping in touch with them so they know it's not being set aside — that agencies are jumping in with both feet."

Belonga has met with other users on the lake to share information "We think it's random in that it was not a group action," he said. "It's a resource user conflict issue on individual level."

He added that there is no difference between a Native and non-Native commercial fishing gear, so he can't say the crime was racially motivated, either. But he can say it was "against commercial fishers, because of the nets."

None of the fishermen were insured, due to the fact that they are not licensed by the Ministry of Natural Resources. Instead they are exercising their treaty right to fish, and make a living at it. For the same reason, they are unable to obtain bank financing.

"Everybody is crying insurance scam, but I have no insurance," said Fred. "Native fishing is a day-to-day thing. We're not on welfare, and we're not doing it to get rich." He and his family live off the Batchewana reserve,

near Carp River on Batchewana Bay outside of Sault, Ont. He drives 50 miles north to his fishing site.

Fred says a lot of people try fishing, but until they do, they just don't understand how hard it is. But he loves it.

"Fishing is not a job, it's an adventure. When that water kicks up, you can feel it," added Darrell. "You respect it, and it'll do the same for you."

Ninety percent of the fresh local fish in Sault Ste. Marie, Ont., is caught by Native fishers, they said.

"It's not too bad, we can start again," said Fred.

A Fisherman's Benefit dinner has been organized for April 20. Tickets will go on sale for the dinner with door prizes, so that people who can't make dinner can still help out, said Belonga.

The community pulled together to donate and cook the fish, and contribute prizes, he said.

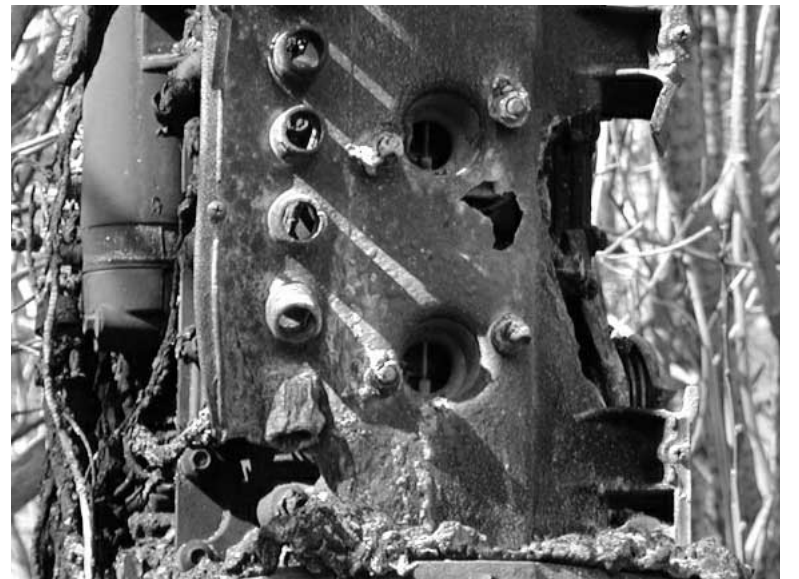


All that's left of Mearow's nets is a puddle of lead.

"It's going to take the guys five or six years to recover from their loss," said Belonga. Even if the arsonists are caught, he estimates that the criminal case will take a year, and civil action will take 3 or 4 years.

Belonga said Fred was able to get an interest-free loan for a boat and motor. With the 15 nets Darrell gave him, he's been able to get back in the water. But he has yet to replace his safety gear.

One of Darrell's customers loaned Darrell \$1,100 for a 30 Hp motor. "It's a small motor for a 22-foot," said Darrell. "But it will get the job done. Getting there is what counts."



A bullet hole made by a rifle can be seen above in one of the fishers' motor. All three were ruined by several shots.



The vandals brought their own gasoline to set the fires.

# COTFMA MEETING BRIEFS ...

## Feb. 24

**PETOSKEY** — The February COTFMA meeting was held in Petoskey during negotiations meetings with federal and state officials.

Grand Traverse Band Treasurer Helen Powell sat in for George Bennett. Ex officio COTFMA board members Anne Bolton and Jerry McLain were absent.

## Reports

Conservation Committees reported working on year 2000 issues.

COTFMA Resource Developer Bucko Teeple was unable to attend but submitted a written progress report stating that the one-year \$126,368 ANA grant application had been sent in. Great Lakes Fishery trust grant to identify and plan for the improvement of access sites is somewhat off schedule but moving along. A draft report is due the end of March, and final plans are due the end of June. Meridian Consultants model plans for access sites are progressing.

## 2000 permit for Hammond Bay access

COTFMA Executive Director Faith McGruther said that this

year's Hammond Bay permit (with special regulations attached) included three more requirements than the 1999 permit, including a requirement to provide a list of vessels and owners with which she disagrees. McGruther, COTFMA Counsel Kathryn Tierney and Fred Paquin will meet later.

## MACE

McGruther suggested that the MACE committee centralize information on vessel safety and develop a safety plan with the U.S. Coast Guard. Tribal EPIRBs and immersion suit exemptions from the USCG have expired, said McGruther.

Tierney said a three-year exemption was issued in exchange for tribal safety regulations. The fishers have cell phones and are within 12 miles of shore. Tierney added that the USCG did not say COTFMA could not continue getting the exemption, so data compilation is important to show USCG that the COTFMA tribes have kept safe.

Vic Matson Sr. suggested setting up meetings between Conservation Committees and USCG Lt. Burt Lahn.

Bay Mills Fisheries Biologist

Ken Gebhardt reported a preliminary completion report on the Lake Huron Assessment project is in review with Technical Review Committee subcommittees. At first, the Michigan DNR strongly objected to content, said Gebhardt. Now, they are willing to talk about their problem with the data analysis.

There was no lift effort for January, February or March, reported Gebhardt, who recommends continuation of project to collect winter data. If the Technical Review Committee ends project, the alternative is to average the data.

COTFMA contracted with its legal counsel, Kathryn Tierney, for another year.

Last year's appropriation request will be resubmitted, the board decided, since McGruther is already scheduled to testify. The Little Traverse Bay Band counsel agreed if the funding is sought for CORA, but not COTFMA.

The COTFMA board approved sending a letter of support for State Rep. Sikkema's bill to sterilize of ballast water in order to prevent further introductions of

exotic species in the Great Lakes.

Matson received COTFMA's support for King's Fishery to hire a consultant to convert to trap nets.

The board approved rescinding an earlier action to split \$20,000 in litigation funds four ways, then approved a motion to split the money five ways to include Little Traverse Bay Band.

## March 23

**SAULT STE. MARIE** — COTFMA met March 23. Sault Tribe Board members Paul Shagen and Mike Lumsden represented Sault Tribe. Bob Guendhardt and John Koon represented Little River Band. Jeff Parker represented Bay Mills Indian Community. Grand Traverse Band's George Bennett and John Canconnon joined by phone. Melanie Vanderlooven represented the BIA while Jerry McClain for USFWS was absent.

## Trust fund

Vic Matson Jr. gave an investment committee report. With the trust at \$3.8 million, summed up Matson, \$832,000 is available for use in June or July.

In a comparison, the trust came out on top against his index, 12.77 percent to 5.33 percent. The index is 50 percent Dow and 50 percent corporate bond market. The trust ended on a poor note in 1999. Federal funds lost \$3,742 due to the intermediate government bonds. Matson said after three to four years of poor performance alternatives are needed. Year 2000 started the same as last year with an equity market rise; year-to-date (YTD) is 5.41 percent, and the balance is 2.11. In a breakdown, the small cap and middle cap investments are generating the return.

The COTFMA board discussed the future of the trust, since requirement of the trust expires with the Consent Agreement. Talking over the options, they decided to set up a committee along with stronger investment approaches.

## Reports

Conservation committees mostly worked on year 2000 and in-house issues. LRB Natural Resource Commissioner John Koon added that they will go along with COTFMA on commercial fishing beacon lights.

Public Information Officer Jennifer Dale reported releasing information on upcoming ballast water hearings for state legislation and publishing a Jan-Feb Tribal Fishing newsletter. She provided an index of slides and digital images available for making presentations. She handed out news clippings, citing one article in particular to be a positive reflection of tribal biological programs. In further work with a successful new fishing heritage curriculum, Dale was glad to see that "Project FISH" has hired a Native artist and redone some of the art tribal staff objected to. Project coordinators have taken other criticisms seriously, saying they didn't realize what they were

doing. She'll continue working on the project.

COTFMA Resource Developer Bucko Teeple attended an Administration for Native Americans (ANA) training and consulted with Native American Management Services for technical assistance in a request for planning and grant monies.

Teeple reported finishing up his work with each tribe on access site needs. Teeple said he should have a good idea of the project by the end of March. The next step is to get the tribes to adopt an overall plan. He suggested Joint Conservation Committee meetings to identify top five sites for the future. Teeple also reported developing 8 x 10 maps with Tracey Brown at Bay Mills Indian Community.

Bay Mills Fishery Biologist Ken Gebhardt reported the Lake Huron Distribution Study is at a standstill, probably due to negotiations.

## Whitefish Point access site repair

COTFMA Executive Director Faith McGruther said that landing dock damage at the Whitefish Point access site, which fishers say is now dangerous to use, has been photo-documented. The damage from last year and this year is probably due to props. Boats pulling out when ice was present could have caused it, with low lake levels contributing, reported McGruther. The same thing is happening at the Dutcher and Beaver Island access sites, she said, and it needs to stop.

Koon added that power loading can cause holes 3-4 feet deep.

According to the permit for the Whitefish Point site, COTFMA did agree to pay for repairs. A filter cloth and gravel is needed. Parker told McGruther to get bids on the project.

## Funding reduced

COTFMA Assistant Executive Director Jane Teneyck reported on reduction in federal funding, to be taken from each tribe's base funding. They are in the process of reprogramming the money, she said.

## McGruther to testify in April

McGruther reported visiting Senator Carl Levin's office concerning COTFMA's \$2.2 million add-on request. She will testify in April. She also held a conference call with Heather Sibbison, special assistant to the Secretary of the Interior, who suggested where delegation letters should be sent. The COTFMA resolution for add-on monies needs to be amended to include Little Traverse Bay Band, she said, and a resolution of support is needed from each tribe.

## COTFMA reps go to annual meeting

COTFMA representatives are invited to the next Northwest Indian Fishery Commission annual meeting. COTFMA will send George Bennett and Bucko Teeple to testify to a federal trust responsibility panel.

## RUSTY CRAYFISH REARS ITS UGLY HEAD: Invader eats twice as much as its Native counterpart

From Minnesota SeaGrant

The rusty crayfish (*Orconectes rusticus*) has invaded parts of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Ontario and many other northern areas. Although native to some parts of the southern Great Lakes states, these crayfish have spread to many northern lakes and streams where they have caused ecological problems.

Jeff Gunderson, Minnesota Sea Grant Extension fisheries educator, has just published the fact sheet, "Rusty Crayfish: A Nasty Invader," that outlines the biology, ecological impacts and identifying characteristics of the rusty crayfish.

Rusty crayfish were probably spread by non-resident anglers who brought them north to use as fishing bait. "These animals are just plain mean," said Gunderson. "They push out the more docile native crayfish and reduce the variety and amount of water plants and animals. They can even lower some populations of fish."

Rusty crayfish inhabit lakes, ponds and streams. They generally use small pockets under rocks, logs and other debris for cover. Rusty crayfish have been shown to reduce the abundance and diversity of aquatic plants. "This can be especially damaging in our relatively unproductive northern lakes where beds of aquatic plants are not abundant," said Gunderson.

Although other crayfish eat aquatic plants and insects, rusty

crayfish may eat twice as much because they have a higher metabolic rate and appetite. They also feed longer and can attain high population densities faster. This means rusty crayfish are more likely to compete with juvenile game fish for insect food than would native crayfish species. Displacement of native crayfish by rusty crayfish could result in less food for fish.

"Environmentally-sound ways to eradicate or control introduced populations have not been developed and none are likely in the near future," said Gunderson. "The best way to prevent further environmental problems is to prevent or slow their spread into new waters."

It is now illegal in both Minnesota and Wisconsin to introduce rusty crayfish into any water body. In Minnesota, it is

illegal to sell live crayfish as bait, introduce crayfish from one water body to another or to transport live rusty crayfish.

The good news is that they're tasty. The harvest of rusty crayfish is just beginning in Minnesota and is expanding in Wisconsin.

To get a copy of the fact sheet, contact MN Sea Grant, (218) 726-6191. For more information about the rusty crayfish, contact Jeff Gunderson, 218.726.8715.

*(Ed. Note: In Michigan, sale or purchase of live rusty crayfish in Michigan is illegal. Michigan DNR Fisheries Biologist Bill Gruhn recently told the press that the spread of the rusty crayfish now appears statewide, hardest hit areas being the western U.P. and southeastern Michigan.)*

## ORCONECTES RUSTICUS



From Minnesota SeaGrant

# BAY MILLS FISHERY PROGRAM PLANS BIG YEAR

By Jennifer Dale

**BAY MILLS** — The tremendous amount of information collected by Bay Mills Indian Community's Fishery program adds to the body of knowledge on the Great Lakes. But more importantly, the data helps the program make predictions about the tribal commercial fishery.

Bay Mills' Fishery program has a very busy season scheduled for this year. Not only is Bay Mills running its own studies, its participating in intertribal and interagency projects, and this year its contracting with the U.S. Geological Survey for a shortjaw cisco study. Often, the program

has numerous studies running at the same time.

Staffing changes are also in the works at the fishery department, which is part of the tribe's Biological Services program. Since 1993, the program has operated with a full time biologist and a full time fishery technician. The program just filled a new position—summer fishery aide—while interviewing for a new fishery technician. High school students and volunteers will also join the team for its summer workload.

The assessment and monitoring schedule for this year is a working schedule that Fishery Biologist Ken Gebhardt is always

ready to modify as the year's needs become known. Some of this year's many studies are a direct result of current fishing negotiations with the state and federal governments, added Gebhardt.

### Commercial Harvest Monitoring

This study monitors population characteristics of important fish species harvested by tribal commercial fishers. The harvested catch is sampled to glean important information, such as age of fish in the catch, and proportion of each age class harvested in the catch.

Gebhardt can determine other fish populations characteristics in that catch, like growth and mortality. "It's a way to collect accurate effort and harvest data at the same time for the target species," he said.

### Lake Whitefish Studies

There are five whitefish studies planned for this year. Whitefish is very important to Bay Mills because it is the fishers' principle catch.

Gebhardt said they are very interested in documenting when a strong "year class" is produced — those years lake whitefish have really good egg hatching success. A good year means there are more than the usual amount of fish produced, said Gebhardt, good news for commercial fishers in four to six years.

The whitefish studies follow the whitefish year classes through time in order to document them. For example, a strong year class may have been in 1990. Then, the 1990 year class will also be the strongest class in 1993, 1994, 1995 and so on, as opposed to other year classes (assuming no major sources of mortality occurred between the time fish were hatched and captured.)

The fishery staff always use the same gear from year to year for consistency in their data. When the next strong class comes along, the information collected also shows that. Each year, using various gear for each size fish, Gebhardt is tracking a number of year classes all at once.

The seining project allows the fishery program to look at the "young of the year," which are the fish born that year, right off the spawning beds, using a 3/16-inch mesh seine. In the lake whitefish recruitment study, variable mesh (1-3 inches) gill nets are used to pick up whitefish 1-3 years old.

The next size up is the trap net recruitment study. This is for fish less than 17 inches long, about 2-4 years old. "This is just before they become legal to catch," said Gebhardt.

With this information in hand, Gebhardt can start making predictions. "This all allows us to predict what the harvest of that year class could be to the commercial fishery in future years. A strong year class could potentially support a commercial fishery for several years," said Gebhardt. "We can predict that."

Assessments continue with the adult-sized, legal fish in the Lake Whitefish Assessments in which lake whitefish abundance is monitored. Later in the season, the program will begin the Fall Whitefish Spawning Condition Study to monitor the condition and activity of spawning lake whitefish.

### Walleye projects

The program has three projects planned related to walleye, one to locate radio tagged walleye, one to study spawning conditions in Waishkey Bay, and one to study the walleye food base.

Bay Mills is involved with walleye because tribes have been stocking walleye for several years. According to Gebhardt, walleye in this area are 60 percent hatchery and 40 percent wild. Gebhardt wants to know where the wild fish are coming from so he can improve the wild to hatchery walleye ratio.

"Biologically speaking, it's better to have predominantly wild stock," he said. In the Walleye Telemetry Project, the job is to locate previously radio-tagged walleye to document habitat and seasonal movement. In the Walleye Spawning Condition Study, fisheries staff will find out if walleye spawn in Waishkey Bay and if so, to identify spawning condition, activity and habitat. Then, Gebhardt said, walleye spawning habitat can be improved.

If fish are being stocked, it's very important to know if the food base is adequate. The forage and recruitment study helps determine abundance and diversity of forage fish populations. Beneficially, the young of the year show up in the study.

### Cisco Assessment

The U.S. Geological Survey asked Bay Mills to conduct gill net assessments to determine whether or not different species of chub (deep water ciscos) exist in Whitefish Bay. Some are considered to have been wiped out, but there has been no documentation for the past 15 years, according to Gebhardt.

### Lake Huron Project

This project, continued from 1999, collects information on catch and mortality of lake whitefish and lake trout in commercial style gill nets targeting whitefish in northern Lake Huron.

### Lake Trout Assessments

This assessment continues a long-term project that documents abundance of wild and hatchery lake trout in Lake Superior.

### Waishkey Bay Drop Net Project

Information on the status of important fish species is obtained in this study, specifically in Waishkey Bay. Information collected includes length and scales (or dorsal spine) for lake whitefish, northern pike, pumpkinseed sunfish, rock bass, smallmouth bass, walleye, yellow perch, and incidental salmonids.

## Bay Mills Indian Community Fishery Program Fishery Assessment & Monitoring Schedule

Month(s) / Project	Week(s) Planned for Project			
	1	2	3	4
<b>MARCH</b>				
Gear and Equipment Preparation			X	X
Net Repair and Construction		X	X	X
Commercial Harvest Monitoring (LS)	X	X	X	X
Lake Huron Project (LH)	X			
Walleye Telemetry Project (LS)	X	X	X	X
Walleye Spawning Condition Study (LS)			X	X
<b>APRIL</b>				
Gear and Equipment preparation	X	X	X	X
Net Repair and Construction	X	X	X	X
Commercial Harvest Monitoring (LS)	X	X	X	X
Walleye Radio Telemetry (LS)	X	X	X	X
Lake Huron Project (LH)		X		
Walleye Spawning Condition Study (LS)	X	X		
Lake Whitefish Recruitment Study	X	X	X	X
<b>MAY</b>				
Lake Trout Assessment (LS)	X	X	X	X
Commercial Harvest Monitoring (LS)	X	X	X	X
Trap Net Recruitment Study (LS)			X	
Lake Huron Project (LH)			X	
Lake Whitefish Recruitment Study	X	X		
Lake Whitefish Assessments (LS)	X	X	X	X
<b>JUNE</b>				
Lake Trout Assessments (LS)	X	X		
Commercial Harvest Monitoring (LS)	X	X	X	X
Trap Net Recruitment Study (LS)				X
Lake Huron Project (LH)				X
Cisco Assessment (LS)			X	
Lake Whitefish Recruitment Study				X
<b>JULY</b>				
Commercial Harvest Monitoring (LS)	X	X	X	X
Trap Net Recruitment Study (LS)	X			
Waishkey Bay Drop Net Project (LS)		X		
Forage Seining (LS)		X		X
Lake Huron Project (LH)	X			
<b>AUGUST</b>				
Commercial Harvest Monitoring (LS)	X	X	X	X
Trap Net Recruitment Study (LS)		X		
Forage Seining (LS)		X		
Lake Huron Project (LH)		X		
<b>SEPTEMBER</b>				
Commercial Harvest Monitoring (LS)	X	X	X	X
Trap Net Recruitment Study (LS)			X	
Forage Seining (LS)			X	X
Lake Huron Project (LH)			X	
<b>OCTOBER</b>				
Commercial Harvest Monitoring (LS)	X	X	X	X
Fall Whitefish Spawning Condition Study (LS)	X	X	X	X
Lake Huron Project				X
<b>NOVEMBER</b>				
Commercial Harvest Monitoring (LS)	X	X	X	X
Fall Whitefish Spawning Condition Study (LS)	X			X
Lake Huron Project	X			
<b>DECEMBER</b>				
Commercial Harvest Monitoring (LS)	X	X	X	X
Fall Whitefish Spawning Condition Study (LS)	X	X	X	X
Lake Huron Project		X		



Tagging Walleye

(Photo courtesy Bay Mills' Fisheries Program)

# SIKKEMA'S BILL SPURS SOLUTIONS

By Jennifer Dale

SAULT STE. MARIE — Sen. Ken Sikkema, R-Grandville, has introduced legislation requiring ships to sterilize their ballast water before discharging it into Michigan's fresh water lakes. Whether or not his bill passes, Sikkema has spurred others to find an effective solution to the

ballast water problem.

Congressman Pete Hoekstra introduced a bill April 5 in Congress to "amend existing laws to require ships entering the Great Lakes to sterilize their ballast tanks or otherwise ensure that they will not introduce non-native organisms through the exchange of ballast water," according to his

## Stupak: bill to ban water sales will go forward

WASHINGTON — In response to a March 15 release of an international report on water diversion, Rep. Bart Stupak, D-Menominee, said he will modify his legislation to bring in line with the study but will remain completely opposed to any future sale or diversion of Great Lakes water.

Stupak today also called on Michigan Gov. John Engler to allocate state resources, including funding, as called for in the report of the International Joint Commission, which recommends that the U.S. and Canadian governments and the governments of Great Lakes states and provinces collect data and implement programs to monitor and manage water use to specific standards.

Stupak's comments followed today's release of a report titled "Protection of the Waters of the Great Lakes," released after a year's study by the IJC, a body made up of U.S. and Canadian appointees to oversee boundary water issues.

The IJC was directed by the two governments to study the issue of sale or diversion of Great Lakes water after the U.S. House in October 1998 unanimously approved a resolution by Stupak opposing any such movement of water.

In July 1999, while the report was in development, Stupak introduced legislation that would impose a moratorium on any water sale until regulations are in place to address the issue, and in August the IJC's interim report supported this action.

"I will fine-tune my bill to bring it in line with the timelines, allocations of responsibilities and recommendations of the IJC's

final report," Stupak said today, "but I will also go beyond the findings of the report and call for a ban on any sales or diversions, now and in the future."

Among the changes, Stupak said he will modify his bill to include the IJC's recommendation that it be directed to assess the situation again in three years and then every 10 years thereafter.

Stupak noted the 70-page report clearly spells out a role for the states and provinces, giving them 24 months to collect better data and develop standards and procedures for potential removal of Great Lakes water, and he urged Engler to follow up on his State of the State pledge to protect the lakes.

"IJC officials told me in a briefing Tuesday that Michigan has done a much poorer job than other states in providing timely and accurate data in such information areas as water use and potential threats to the water ecosystem," Stupak said.

"This report makes clear that at the state level and at the federal level we all have an important role in conserving water and protecting the Great Lakes from this new threat.

"With the continued support of my House colleagues from both sides of the aisle, I will do what the residents of Northern Michigan expect of me, and I hope Michigan and the other states and provinces will respond as well.

"My commitment, however, remains firm," Stupak said. "We will not allow the sale or diversion of Great Lakes water, not in three years, not in 10 years, not ever."

recent statement.

The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) testified at two of the hearings Sikkema sponsored to get feedback on his bill. At the March 18 public hearing in Traverse City, the DEQ said it will convene a panel of international experts including the shipping industry to put a stop to the further introduction exotic species, according to the Record Eagle. At the April 6 hearing in Sault Ste. Marie, DEQ spokesman Bill McCracken reported the panel of "technical experts" had already held its first meeting, each with its own task. McCracken said he felt optimistic about a one year time limit for finding a solution.

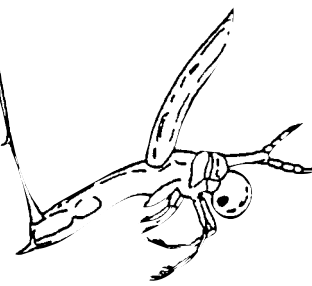
At the Sault Ste. Marie hearing, Jerry Oullette, a member of the Ontario Parliament, testified to introducing his own bill to control the introduction exotic species.

Laws passed in 1990 and 1996 to deal with the growing invasion of exotic species into the Great Lakes, such as the ruffe, round goby, spiny water flea, zebra mussels and a number of other destructive non-native species, have been inadequate. At least 14 aquatic exotic species have been introduced since 1996. While the environmental and economic effects of exotic species are being felt, and the extent of the present damage is still being assessed, agencies have not aggressively sought an answer, until now.

Sikkema's bill calls for all ships to sterilize the ballast before discharge. Even Great Lakes shippers, which contribute to the invader problem by spreading exotic species throughout the Great Lakes system, carrying the exotic aquatic invaders from port

to port.

The Traverse City Record Eagle reported that biologists, sport fishermen, the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians and charter boat operators testified in favor of the bill, most citing environmental dangers, said the Record



*Cercopagis pengoi*, an aquatic exotic invader

Eagle. At the Sault meeting, environmental groups and the Inter Tribal Fisheries Assessment program testified in favor of the bill. Others testified in qualified favor, wanting the legislation to work with other states and the Canadian and federal governments.

Problems with Sikkema's bill are both practical and political. "It starts at the St. Lawrence Seaway ... Shut the door at that level," said Ralph Wilcox, a Native fisher who has seen worrisome changes in commercial fish species' behavior. He suggested a federal bill with "some teeth": Sterilize at the first lock, give authority to board and test bilges and sludge, and assess fines for non-compliance.

Groups such as Coast Guard, shipping industry executives and other boaters testified against the bill as economically threatening.

## Hoekstra bill aims to fight against new pests in Great Lakes

**Newly discovered European flounder is latest evidence of need for legislation**

WASHINGTON — A European species of flounder recently found in Lake Erie is the latest evidence that laws governing the ballast water of ocean-going ships in the Great Lakes need to be improved, Congressman Pete Hoekstra said Thursday.

At a Capitol Hill press conference Thursday afternoon, Dr. Chris Goddard, executive secretary of the Ann Arbor-based Great Lakes Fishery Commission, showed attendees a foot-long flounder recently caught in the waters of Lake Erie. Goddard said the fish almost certainly was European in origin and likely found its way to the Great Lakes after being expelled from a ship's ballast tank.

"It clearly shouldn't be in the Great Lakes," said Goddard, who added that he believes the fish is one of two species of flounder that are native to European waters. The Great Lakes Fishery Commission was established in 1955 to oversee fishery issues in

the Great Lakes both in Canada and the U.S. and specifically to develop programs to deal with sea lampreys, one of the Great Lakes' most damaging invasive species.

Goddard said that laws passed in 1990 and 1996 in an attempt to stem the tide of invasive, non-native organisms infiltrating the Great Lakes have not been adequate. In recent years, organisms such as zebra mussels, the Eurasian ruffe and the spiny goby have been found in the Great Lakes with devastating results.

"The rate of biological introduction has not decreased over the last 10 years," said Goddard, who said at least 144 non-native aquatic organisms have been introduced in the Great Lakes since the mid-1800s and that on average at least one non-native organism is introduced into the system every year.

Hoekstra, speaking at a Capitol Hill press conference Thursday afternoon, said his leg-

islation, the Great Lakes Ecology Protection Act of 2000 (H.R. 4191), would amend existing laws to require ships entering the Great Lakes to sterilize their ballast tanks or otherwise ensure that they will not introduce non-native organisms through the exchange of ballast water.

"These organisms can wreak havoc on native organisms and habitat, local communities and the economy," said Hoekstra, who introduced the legislation last week with the support of several Michigan congressmen, including James Barcia, D-Bay City. "We must do what we can, in an environmentally safe way, to ensure that no more new organisms invade the waters of the Great Lakes."

Hoekstra said he and his colleagues hope to work with environmentalists, shippers and other interested parties in the U.S. and Canada to perfect the legislation in coming months.

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