



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Alpena Fishery Resources Office FY 2007 Station Activities

Partnerships and Accountability

Partnerships are essential for effective fisheries conservation. Many agencies, organizations, and private individuals are involved in fisheries conservation and management, but no one can do it alone. Together, these stakeholders combine efforts and expertise to tackle challenges facing fisheries conservation. The success of these partnerships will depend on strong, two-way communications and accountability. The Alpena Fishery Resources Office in Alpena, Michigan provides fishery conservation in cooperation with many partners. The accomplishments listed below provide examples of some of the partnerships that were established to meet fishery and habitat related goals in Fiscal Year 2007 (October 2006-September 2007).

Alpena FRO Meets to Discuss Outlook for Alpena Federal Building

*Submitted by Jerry McClain
Fishery Biologist*

Alpena FRO Project Leader McClain met with Mr. Harold Chase, District Office Manager for Senator Carl Levin, on October 25, 2006 to discuss the future of the Alpena Federal Building and progress in locating alternatives for housing the Alpena FRO. Senator Levin closed his office in the Alpena Federal Building in 2004 but remains concerned about the conditions for remaining tenants in the building. At the present time only the Alpena FRO and the U.S. Coast Guard are occupying space in the building and both are seeking alternate locations due to the deteriorating environmental and personnel safety conditions of the aging building. Mr. Chase held a similar meeting with the Coast Guard in early October.

Although the Senator is not seeking a specific resolution to the issue he has committed that his staff will assist the two agencies in working with GSA to meet their office needs. Mr. Chase indicated that he would be drafting a letter of inquiry for the Senator's signature that would go to GSA and the regional or district offices of the two agencies seeking an update on progress in the search for new space.

Continued interaction between the Alpena FRO and district congressional offices is important in keeping the legislators and their staff aware of the important work being done by Service staff in their districts and states. Meetings such as this are important for addressing the Service's Fisheries

program Vision for the Future priorities of “Partnerships and Accountability” and “Workforce Management”.

2006 Great Lakes Lake Sturgeon Coordination Meeting

*Submitted by James Boase
Fishery Biologist*

Members of the Service’s Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem Team Lake Sturgeon Committee, with assistance from a steering committee of several partner representatives, held a third Great Lakes Lake Sturgeon Coordination meeting, November 29-30, 2006 in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan. The purpose of these meetings is to provide a forum to foster communication and exchange of information relating to the study, management, and restoration of lake sturgeon in the Great Lakes basin, to address priority research and assessment needs, and to address selected emerging issues.



The focus of the 2006 meeting was to provide updates on specific issues that were identified by participants at the 2002 and 2004 meetings and to address emerging issues related to lake sturgeon law enforcement. Issues covered during the first day included sessions on habitat use and juvenile ecology, genetics and management implications, and stream side rearing. Day two focused on law enforcement issues related to lake sturgeon. The format for each session was to have a group of presentations followed by a facilitated discussion period. An evening social during the first night provided an open forum to discuss sturgeon research with colleagues and featured poster presentations that described a wide range of sturgeon work.

Over 120 individuals attended the meeting representing 40 different entities including state, tribal/First Nation, federal and provincial governments, academic, private, and other NGOs. Evaluation forms completed by participants were extremely positive and supportive of the meeting and indicated that attendees were very pleased with the presentations and opportunities for interpersonal interaction. This was the final of three such meetings funded by a Great Lakes Fishery Trust grant. Planning, coordination and hosting of the meetings was provided by the Service in collaboration with other agency personnel. Proceedings from the 2002 and 2004 meetings are available on the Great Lakes Lake Sturgeon Website and the 2006 proceedings will be available in early 2007.

This meeting provided an excellent forum to bring the leading lake sturgeon researchers in North America to present the most current research and to address emerging lake sturgeon issues in the

Great Lakes. The Service's mission and efforts to restore native fish in the Great Lakes was clearly defined and explained. The meeting also provided an excellent opportunity for collaboration and outreach with both government and non-governmental researchers. This activity is consistent with and supportive of the “Partnerships and Accountability” and “Aquatic Species Conservation and Management” priorities of the Service’s Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

St. Marys River Fishery Task Group Meeting

*Submitted by Anjanette Bowen
Fishery Biologist*

The St. Marys River Fishery Task Group (SMRFTG) met on November 2, 2006 to coordinate and discuss upcoming activities and issues of concern regarding St. Marys River fisheries. Alpena FRO Fishery Biologist Bowen chaired the meeting which was held at the Ontario Forest Research Institute in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. The group welcomed new resource members Teri Winter and Valerie Walker who replaced retired Harvey Robbins as a representative from Sault College of Applied Arts and Technology, and Dr. Istvan Imre as a representative from Algoma University. The group discussed data processing, analysis, and report writing for the Fish Community Survey conducted in August. A draft report will be completed in spring 2007. Other items discussed included the need for a summary of fall walleye recruitment survey data and a potential symposium on the St. Marys River or large rivers at an upcoming IAGLR conference. The next task group meeting is scheduled to be held in February 2007.



The SMRFTG is comprised of a number of agencies with management authority or other interests in the St. Marys River. Membership includes the Michigan DNR, Ontario MNR, Bay Mills Indian Community, Chippewa Ottawa Resource Authority, DFO Canada, Lake Superior State University, Sault College of Applied Arts, and the Service.

The task group was established under the authority of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission's Lake Huron Committee in 1997 to achieve a meaningful understanding and a joint strategy for enhancing and maximizing the fishery resources of the St. Marys River. Publications produced by the St. Marys River fishery by the Task Group may be found on the Great Lakes Fishery Commission's website at <http://www.glfc.org/lakecom/lhc/lhchome.php> under 'Publications and Products'.

St. Marys River Fishery Task Group efforts fulfill a multi-agency partnership approach to fishery conservation and management on the St. Marys River. These activities support the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future priorities for “Partnerships and Accountability” and “Aquatic Species Conservation and Management”.

Crayfish Provided for University of Notre Dame Study

*Submitted by Anjanette Bowen
Fishery Biologist*

In early November 2006, Biologist Bowen provided crayfish samples collected from the St. Marys River to Jody Murray with the University of Notre Dame. Murray is documenting the distribution of all crayfish species around the Great Lakes. Alpena FRO collected the crayfish samples during a fish community survey of the St. Marys River with variable mesh gillnets in August and AIS surveillance bottom trawling in September. The crayfish were collected at a number of areas from Sault Ste. Marie to DeTour Village. This effort is compatible with the Fishery Program's Vision for the Future priority for "Partnerships and Accountability".

A Conservation Roundtable

*Submitted by Heather Rawlings
Fish and Wildlife Biologist*

A Conservation Roundtable was held in Traverse City, Michigan on December 4, 2006 at Northwestern Michigan College's Great Lakes Campus. Sponsored by Senator Carl Levin, the Great Lakes Nonprofit Institute, and the Great Lakes Water Studies Institute, this roundtable was established to showcase Service habitat conservation granting programs. Carl Levin's representative, Harold Chase, provided opening remarks for the session. Four Service biologists highlighted their programs of specialty, which included: Stewart Cogswell, (Green Bay FRO) who



presented the Fish Passage program, Bob Kavetsky (East Lansing FO), the Coastal Program, Heather Rawlings (Alpena FRO) the Partners for Fish and Wildlife program, and Christie Deloria (East Lansing FO, Marquette) the Endangered Species and Coastal Wetland Grant programs. Craig Czarnecki (East Lansing FO) was the MC, and Jim Hudgins (East Lansing PLO) led the wrap-up session. The forum was casual, with abundant opportunity for the audience to ask questions and voice concerns. The invitees for the roundtable were local Traverse City non-profit conservation organizations, conservation districts, land conservancies, and local government entities. Approximately 35 citizens attended the roundtable. Attendees completed an evaluation at the end of the session, and gave both the speakers and facilities high marks. This event will serve as a template for upcoming roundtable sessions that have been requested by other Michigan congressional offices. It was an effective forum for the Service to interact with local partners.

Outreach events such as this Conservation Roundtable contribute toward the "Partnerships and Accountability" component of the Service Fisheries Program's Vision for the Future.

Tag Identification Database Contains Over 12,500 Tag Numbers

Submitted by Adam Kowalski
Fish and Wildlife Biologist

During the month of December, Fishery Biologist Adam Kowalski completed the final updates of the database and met the remaining commitments of a grant funded by the Great Lakes Fishery Trust. The grant was awarded in 2004 to construct and maintain a database to house tag information such as tag type, tag number, tag location, and tagger contact information. The database has been operational for over a year now and contains over 12,500 passive integrated transponder (PIT) tags and over 100 tag sequences for external tags.

Kowalski completed the final report and submitted it to the Great Lakes Fishery Trust and final payment has been received. Kowalski will continue to maintain and

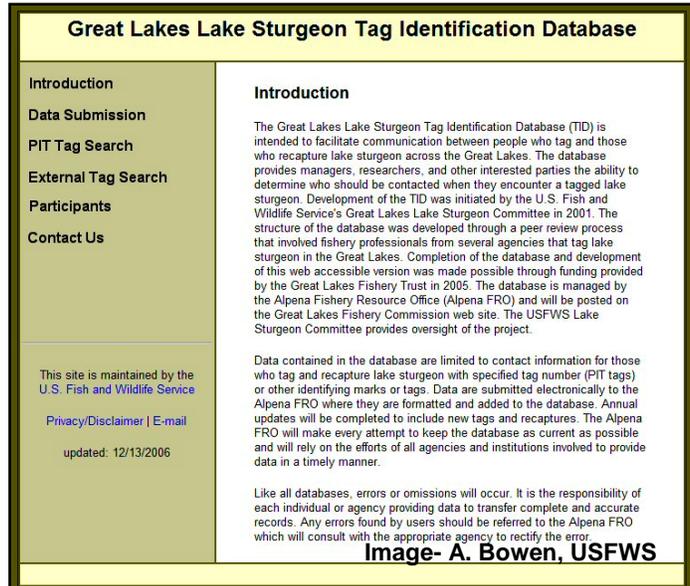
update the database by requesting and entering tagging information annually. Feedback to Kowalski has been positive and the database seems to be getting a lot of use by biologists looking up information for tagged lake sturgeon they have captured. The database is housed at the Great Lakes Fishery Commission's web site and can be viewed at the following web address <http://www.glfc.org/sturgeontag/index.htm>.

This database will improve the information sharing process between agencies and the general public who may encounter tagged lake sturgeon. The multi-partner nature of this work is consistent with the Service's goal of establishing and maintaining open, interactive communication with its partner agencies under the "Partnerships and Accountability" priority of the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

Alpena FRO participates in Michigan Project Leaders Meeting

Submitted by Jerry McClain
Fishery Biologist

On January 9 and 10, 2007, Project Leader McClain participated in a Michigan Project Leaders Meeting in East Lansing, Michigan. Although the principal objective of this annual meeting is to



Great Lakes Lake Sturgeon Tag Identification Database

Introduction	Introduction
Data Submission	The Great Lakes Lake Sturgeon Tag Identification Database (TID) is intended to facilitate communication between people who tag and those who recapture lake sturgeon across the Great Lakes. The database provides managers, researchers, and other interested parties the ability to determine who should be contacted when they encounter a tagged lake sturgeon. Development of the TID was initiated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Great Lakes Lake Sturgeon Committee in 2001. The structure of the database was developed through a peer review process that involved fishery professionals from several agencies that tag lake sturgeon in the Great Lakes. Completion of the database and development of this web accessible version was made possible through funding provided by the Great Lakes Fishery Trust in 2005. The database is managed by the Alpena Fishery Resource Office (Alpena FRO) and will be posted on the Great Lakes Fishery Commission web site. The USFWS Lake Sturgeon Committee provides oversight of the project.
PIT Tag Search	Data contained in the database are limited to contact information for those who tag and recapture lake sturgeon with specified tag number (PIT tags) or other identifying marks or tags. Data are submitted electronically to the Alpena FRO where they are formatted and added to the database. Annual updates will be completed to include new tags and recaptures. The Alpena FRO will make every attempt to keep the database as current as possible and will rely on the efforts of all agencies and institutions involved to provide data in a timely manner.
External Tag Search	Like all databases, errors or omissions will occur. It is the responsibility of each individual or agency providing data to transfer complete and accurate records. Any errors found by users should be referred to the Alpena FRO which will consult with the appropriate agency to rectify the error.
Participants	Image- A. Bowen, USFWS
Contact Us	

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update and familiarize participants with activities of the other program offices in the state, this year's meeting focused on a central topic for a large portion of the first day.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) has developed their State Wildlife Action Plan and is in the early stages of implementation. Michigan Project Leaders participated in a discussion of ways the Service could assist Michigan with the implementation process. Mike Sweet, Twin Cities Federal Assistance Program and Amy Clark Eagle, MDNR were on hand to provide their perspectives and help the group develop a strategy for providing assistance. A number of action items were agreed upon as starting points and continued discussion between the Service and MDNR will help guide the collaborative effort. McClain will serve as the Service lead for communication with the MDNR as the implementation process is developed and local coordination between Service offices and local MDNR staff will continue.

Coordination meetings such as this are important for development and enhancement of cross programmatic partnerships necessary for effective delivery of Service programs to outside partners. This effort is consistent with and supportive of the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future priorities of "Partnerships and Accountability" and "Workforce Management".

2007 Science Night at Defer Elementary

***Submitted by Jim McFee
Fishery Biologist***

On February 2, 2007 Alpena FRO biologist Jim McFee took part in the Defer Elementary School science night. The school is located in Grosse Point Park, Michigan on the shores of Lake St. Clair. Science night consisted of several rooms that more than 200 students and parents could visit. Most rooms were dealing with physics related topics. The Fish and Wildlife Service room dealt with educating the students and parents about invasive species and control measures.

The night was filled with questions and answers about aquatic nuisance species. A display board filled with information on nuisance species triggered the questions in addition to a DVD on Asian carp. The display board contained information on round goby, tubenose goby, Eurasian ruffe, sea lamprey, zebra mussels and Asian carp. The students also had a chance to look at real fish preserved in plastic or alcohol. These items gave the students a chance to see some of the species first hand, to help them identify them on their next fishing or lake trip. Plenty of literature was also available to take home. The big message of the night was to help stop the spread of these unwanted species by cleaning boats and not dumping bait.

As a follow-up to the program, students were involved in a project drawing pictures of their favorite Michigan lake experience. The collection of pictures will be sent to state and federal congressional representatives to encourage support for construction of a permanent fish barrier in the Chicago Sanitary Canal. This fish barrier is the last line of defense for the Great Lakes from Asian Carp. This event once again shows how education is the strongest tool the natural resource profession can use.

This effort provided a unique opportunity to create new partnerships with both governmental and non-governmental agencies to achieve common Great Lakes management objectives. Maintaining these collaborative relationships allows for the most efficient use of limited human and fiscal resources. This project is consistent with the “Partnerships and Accountability”, “Aquatic Species Conservation and Management”, “Public Use”, and “Leadership in Science and Technology” focus areas of the Fisheries Program’s Vision for the Future.

FHC Hill Week 2007

*Submitted by Susan Wells
Fishery Biologist*

The annual Fisheries and Habitat Conservation (FHC) Hill Week kicked off on February 26 and continued through March 2, 2007. The theme for this year’s event was “Species Survival Revival”, highlighting the efforts of the Fisheries Division to restore self sustaining aquatic populations. Months of preparation by many people were required to plan and successfully host this event. While on detail in the FHC Branch, Biologist Wells assisted with formulation of displays for the event and attended 5 congressional visits to discuss Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia (VHS), the National Fish Passage Program (NFPP), and the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (NFHAP).

FHC Hill Week also coincided with the quarterly meeting of the NFHAP Board. The meeting took place over two days where the topics of interim objectives, proposed legislation, and partnerships were discussed. Biologist Wells assisted with preparation of materials and attended the full meeting.

This is an example of collaboration between federal, state, and NGOs to promote the work the Service conducts for the benefit of aquatic resources. This project addresses the Service’s Fisheries Program Vision for the Future priorities of “Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management”, and “Partnerships and Accountability”.

2007 Sandusky Bay, Ohio Walleye Telemetry Project

*Submitted by James McFee
Fishery Biologist*

Service Biologist Jim McFee provided assistance to the Ohio Division of Wildlife (ODOW) for the second year of a walleye telemetry project. McFee traveled to the Sandusky, Ohio Lake Erie Research Station several times during the months of February and March 2007 to help ODOW ready gear and provide instruction on the use of telemetry equipment to the crew that will be continuing the project initiated by McFee when employed at the station.

The Sandusky River and Bay walleye spawning stocks are a very important contributor to the Lake Erie walleye population. In the spring of 2006 McFee initiated a walleye telemetry project to

investigate additional spawning locations in Sandusky Bay. The project involved tagging 50 adult walleye with Lotek radio transmitters. Fish collection was performed near the mouth of the bay after ice out using short duration gillnet sets and a commercial seine. After capture selected adults, both males and females, were surgically implanted by McFee with 16g individually coded transmitters. Determination of sex was decided by body shape, due to the lack of visual gametes. After implantation tracking of the fish started. Tracking was conducted using fixed station, aerial, and mobile boat tracking. Three fixed stations are located in the Sandusky Bay and River, the middle of the bay at a bridge constriction, the mouth of the river, and just downstream of the historical spawning site in the river. Each station records the presence of individual fish if they pass the station. Mobile boat and aerial tracking consists of running transects that cover the entire bay, to ensure sufficient radio coverage. The river tracking is performed by traveling upstream to the Ballville Dam, which acts as a fish barrier to any further upstream migration. In 2007 egg mats will be added to the study to confirm spawning in the bay, at locations where fish were located during windows of spawning water temperatures in 2006.



The second year of data will potentially reveal additional spawning locations for this important walleye stock and give biologists information on successive year spawning. McFee will be involved as a consultant if question in data collection occur and will have a hand in the final analysis and write up, to continue the partnership between these two agencies.

This effort provided a unique opportunity to create new partnerships with both governmental and non-governmental agencies to achieve common Great Lakes management objectives. Maintaining these collaborative relationships allows for the most efficient use of limited human and fiscal resources. This project is consistent with the “Partnerships and Accountability”, “Aquatic Species Conservation and Management”, and “Leadership in Science and Technology” priorities of the Fisheries Program’s Vision for the Future.

Alpena FRO participates in Michigan’s Wildlife Action Plan partners meeting

*Submitted by Jerry McClain
Fishery Biologist*

Project Leader McClain traveled to East Lansing on March 8, 2007 to participate in *Michigan’s Wildlife Action Plan: Conservation Partners’ Working Meeting*. The meeting was held to begin the process of identifying priorities and actions for implementation of their State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP). The meeting was well attended by over 70 representatives of state, federal and NGO

partner agencies and resulted in a very productive one-day session. In advance of the meeting a questionnaire was circulated to invited participants to help identify the highest priority issues to focus the discussion when the group convened. Breakout sessions were convened during the meeting to address the five highest priorities defined by the questionnaire (Invasive Species, Fragmentation, Wetland Modifications, Social Attitudes and Altered Hydrologic Regimes). Numerous actions were agreed upon by the group and the next step will be refining the list to address a manageable suite of actions to facilitate the initial implementation phase of the SWAP.

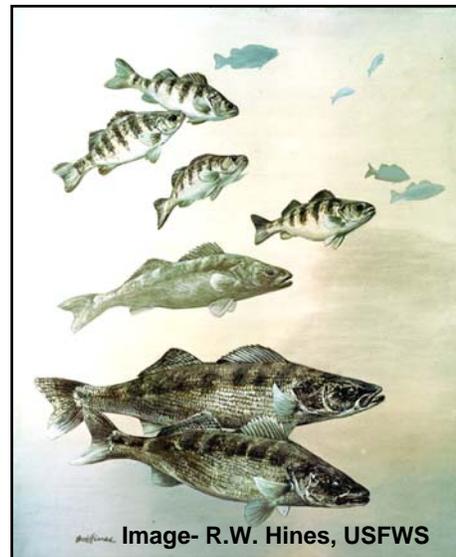
Also attending the meeting and representing the Service were Jim Hudgins (Partners Program) and Chris Mensing (ELFO). It is likely that additional meetings will be held to continue moving the process along.

Interagency gatherings such as this are critically important for effective natural resource management and partnership development. This effort is consistent with the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future priority of "Partnership and Accountability".

The Alpena FRO Partners with The University of Toledo to Collect Native Fish Population tissues for Genetic studies

*Submitted by Anjanette Bowen
Fishery Biologist*

The Alpena FRO collected tissues from spawning populations of yellow perch and walleye in Thunder Bay, Lake Huron during regularly scheduled ruffe surveillance activities. Yellow perch and walleye were encountered as by-catch during sampling which consisted of overnight sets with small mesh (1.3cm) gill nets (33 x 1.8m). Sampling was conducted biweekly during the month of April 2007. Tissues samples consisted of a 1cm fin clip and were collected from approximately 50 yellow perch and 20 walleye. Tissues were kept on ice and fresh frozen in water, then shipped via Fed Ex to The University of Toledo - Great Lakes Genetic Laboratory. Tissues will aid in development of DNA markers to distinguish unique spawning populations of these native species.



Collaborative relationships that benefit natural resources allow for the most efficient use of limited human and fiscal resources. This project is consistent with the "Partnerships and Accountability" priority of the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

Lake Sturgeon Recovery Efforts Highlighted on Detroit Public Television

*Submitted by James Boase
Fishery Biologist*

It has been four years since researchers from Michigan Sea Grant, USGS, Michigan DNR, and the Service first sat down to brainstorm on the idea of constructing an artificial lake sturgeon spawning reef in the Detroit River. Those early planning meetings, the research that followed, construction of the reefs, and the history of lake sturgeon were highlighted in a documentary titled “Giants in the River” which aired on Detroit Public Television on April 26, 2007.



Researchers and partners from Michigan Sea Grant, USGS, Michigan DNR, DTE Energy, JJR Consulting, and the Service were interviewed in the documentary. This is the second time the documentary has been aired on Detroit Public Television and since the initial airing on April 30, 2006 edits to the film have been made. Changes to the original film include the capture of the first adult lake sturgeon captured on the reef during the spawning period in the spring of 2006 and use of the reef by the northern madtom a state listed species in Michigan and a federally listed species in Canada.

Along with the documentary Michigan Sea Grant has developed an educational lake sturgeon display. Initial unveiling of the display was held at the Detroit Science Center located in downtown Detroit during the spring of 2006. The display has since moved to the Smith Terminal at Detroit Metropolitan Airport located in Romulus, Michigan. For those interested in further information about the display or for a copy of the documentary you can visit the Michigan Sea Grant website located at http://www.miseagrant.umich.edu/sturgeon/sturgeon_exhibit.html. The site includes information about the exhibit, the history of lake sturgeon, a sturgeon quiz and links to websites of all of the partners involved in the project. Primary partners from the Service include John Hartig, Manager of the Detroit River



International Wildlife Refuge (DRIWR) and James Boase, Fishery Biologist with the Alpena Fishery Resources Office (FRO).

This collaborative effort provided an excellent opportunity to broadcast to a large public audience and provided an opportunity to explain the Service's mission and the role that Alpena FRO and DRIWR play in providing assistance for management of Great Lakes fish and wildlife resources. Specifically, information was provided about the efforts of the Service and its partners to rehabilitate native lake sturgeon populations in the Great Lakes and the role that Alpena FRO and DRIWR have in this endeavor. This effort supports the "Partnerships and Accountability" and "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management" priorities of the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

Benefit Dinner for the Detroit River Refuge Alliance Held in Monroe Michigan

*Submitted by James Boase
Fishery Biologist*

On Saturday April 28, 2007 the Second Annual Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge Alliance Benefit Dinner was held at the Immaculate Heart of Mary Motherhouse in Monroe Michigan. The Alliance is a non-profit group of organizations that build the capacity of the U. S.

Fish and Wildlife Service to deliver its mission for the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge (DRIWR). The benefit was attended by over 400 people and included a strolling dinner and drinks as guests bid on silent and live auction items. Highlight of the evening were the presentations and speeches given by Congressman John D. Dingell, Congressman John Conyers, Member of Canadian Parliament Jeff Watson, Canadian Consul General Robert Noble, Sister Mary Fran the leader of Mary Motherhouse, Refuge Manager John Hartig, and speeches by a number of other local dignitaries. The amount of funds raised in 2006 and in 2007 has totaled over \$200,000.



Photo- M. Houston, DTE Energy

Fishery Biologist James Boase from the Alpena FRO was an invited guest because of his fisheries work within the Refuge and related work on the Detroit River over the past 5 years. Since Boase began working with the Service in 2002 he has worked with Refuge Manager John Hartig to identify fishery assessment needs within Refuge. The refuge stretches along 48 miles of the Detroit River and western Lake Erie shoreline. This area of the Great Lakes forms a unique link between the upper Great Lakes and lower Great Lakes. Within the Refuge boundaries are a unique group of

islands, coastal wetland, shoal and upland habitats. As part of the Service's Challenge Cost Share Grant Program and the Science Support Program, biologists from Alpena FRO, DRIWR, Michigan DNR Lake Erie Management Unit, Michigan DNR Lake St. Clair Research Station, and USGS Great Lakes Science Center have been working to identify important near shore nursery areas and fish spawning areas in the Detroit River and western Lake Erie.

During the 2005 near shore fish survey along western Lake Erie 46 different fish species were collected. In 2006 efforts were focused in the lower Detroit River where 55 fish species were collected. Results from both years were able to demonstrate that some state listed species as well as many economically valuable sport fish species were using the near shore areas, located within the Refuge boundaries, as nursery areas. Other research over the past two years has determined that lake whitefish have returned to the Detroit River and are reproducing within the Refuge, a first in almost a century. Refuge Manager John Hartig has used these findings as leverage when setting up some of the management and cooperative agreements with private and corporate land owners within the Refuge boundaries and as a result the refuge has grown from 304 acres in 2001 to almost 5000 acres in 2007.

The benefit dinner provided an excellent opportunity to interact with federal, state and local governing officials along with interest groups working with the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. This gathering provided an opportunity to explain the Service's mission and efforts to manage fisheries resources within the Refuge. This outreach event supports the "Partnerships and Accountability" and "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management" priorities of the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

Regional Directorate Team Meets on the Detroit River

*Submitted by James Boase
Fishery Biologist*

On May 10, 2007 Fishery Biologists James Boase and Jim McFee from Alpena Fishery Resources Office had the opportunity to demonstrate some of their work in the Huron-Erie Corridor to members of the Regional Directorate Meeting on the Detroit River that day were Deputy Regional Director Charlie Wooley and Director of Great Lakes Refuges Jon Kauffeld from the regional office, along with Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge Manager John Hartig and his staff including Steve Dushane and Stephanie Millsap. John Hartig arranged the meeting to get Charlie Wooley and Jon Kauffeld out on the Detroit River to tour some of the new properties managed by the refuge and to see some of the



ongoing fishery research taking place within the refuge. BASF Corporation provided use of their corporate boat to shuttle the group to locations on the river and provided lunch at the Fighting Island Lodge located on Fighting Island.

Alpena FRO biologists have been conducting fisheries assessments within the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge (DRIWR) on the Detroit River and western Lake Erie since 2005. Research efforts have involved collaboration with USGS Great Lakes Science Center, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada. Alpena staff have worked closely with John Hartig when he was River Navigator and now as Refuge Manager to identify issues affecting aquatic resources within the DRIWR.

Alpena's current efforts have been focusing on an area at the northeast corner of Fighting Island where Canadian funds from Environment Canada and U.S. funds from the Fish and Wildlife Service Challenge Cost Share Program have funded phase one (pre-construction assessment) of a three phase project to build a lake sturgeon spawning reef. News of the joint US/Canadian project within the DRIWR was simultaneously released by Congressman John Dingell and Canadian Member of Parliament Jeff Watson, <http://www.dwfonline.com/PDF%20Files/Fighting%20Island%20Sturgeon%20Reef.pdf>, <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/DetroitRiver/documents/IslandSturgeonReefWatson.pdf> and has since been picked up by the Detroit News, <http://www.detnews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070530/METRO/705300384/1050/rss19>.

Following a tour of the Refuge, Charlie Wooley and Jon Kauffeld assisted with the lifting of setlines, assessment gear used to capture adult lake sturgeon near the proposed Fighting Island Reef site. Three lake sturgeon were captured that day with the largest one measuring over five feet in length. Charlie described it as the "highlight of the trip".

This project is an example of the Alpena FRO's commitment to the following Fisheries Vision Priorities: "Partnerships and Accountability" and "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management".

Deputy Director Luthi meets with Alpena FRO staff

*Submitted by Jerry McClain
Fishery Biologist*

Service Deputy Director Randall Luthi was in Michigan the week of May 13, 2007 to visit with staff and view various aspects of agency programs in the state. As part of the tour, Alpena FRO Project Leader McClain and Biologist Rawlings met Mr. Luthi during his visit to the Jordan River NFH and escorted him back to Alpena to meet with station staff. Mr. Luthi was accompanied on the tour by Deputy Regional Director



Photo- J. McClain, USFWS

Charlie Wooley and East Lansing Field Supervisor Craig Czarnecki. On the return to Alpena the group stopped to view and discuss the Eichorn Bridge road stream crossing project on the Thunder Bay River. The project, completed in 2003, was a large partnership effort to improve habitat for several native fish species and was funded, in part, by the Partners for Fish and Wildlife and Fish Passage Programs delivered by the Alpena FRO in the northern lower peninsula of Michigan. In addition, the group stopped to view a restored wetland site west of Alpena.

Following the tour, the group met the remainder of the Alpena FRO staff for dinner where the various programs of the station were explained.

This activity is consistent with and supportive of the “Partnerships and Accountability”, “Aquatic Species Conservation and Management”, and “Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management” priorities of the Service’s Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

Detroit River Work Featured on Detroit News Website

***Submitted by James McFee
Fishery Biologist***

Alpena FRO biologists Jim McFee and James Boase had the opportunity to showcase their Detroit River field work. During the week of May 14, 2007 Biologist Boase conducted a phone interview with The Detroit News reporter Christine Ferretti. On May 23, 2007 cameraman, Ricardo Thomas, and videographer, David Coates, both from The Detroit News joined biologist McFee on the Service research vessel Sentinel. Results of the interviews were published in the May 30th Detroit News along with an interesting video clip that is available at the on line link. Both can be viewed at the following website:



<http://detnews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070530/METRO/705300384>.

The article and video clip highlighted some of the research Alpena FRO has been working on during the spring of 2007. The research was designed to assess historic spawning locations and to obtain pre-construction assessment data for a proposed artificial spawning reef. Efforts last year and this year have been to identify if historic spawning locations along the entire length of the Detroit River are still being used. Sampling locations are located in both US and Canadian waters with a majority of the sites falling within the boundaries of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. This work gives biologists an opportunity to compare past and present species usage in

given location. The target species for this work are the economically valuable walleye, lake whitefish, and lake sturgeon. Gear for capturing adults consisted of setlines and gillnets. Larval fish were captured by towing Bongo nets and eggs were collected using gangs of egg mats anchored to the bottom. The larval fish and egg work was performed by USGS biologists at the Great Lakes Science Center.

Most site locations changed daily except for one consistent location at the northeast corner of Fighting Island. Fighting Island, a large island found on the Canadian side of the Detroit River, is owned by the BASF Corporation and is the area of a proposed spawning reef construction project. This is a collaborative effort between many agencies both from the US and Canada including Environment Canada, Essex Region Conservation Authority, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, USGS Great Lakes Science Center, BASF Corporation, DTE Energy, and the Service. A constructed reef in this location has the potential to be very beneficial to a wide range of species including our target species walleye, whitefish, and lake sturgeon.

Service biologists captured fourteen different species in gillnets throughout the survey and all were present near the proposed spawning reef site. The gillnet catch was dominated by walleye which ranged in size from 391mm to 668mm. The setline portion of the study yielded 59 lake sturgeon ranging in size from 722mm to 1725mm. All captured sturgeon were measured, weighed, tagged, and released. Two additional juvenile sturgeon (506mm, 350mm) were captured in gillnets at the southeast corner of Fighting Island. Larval fish and egg data is still being processed by USGS biologists. This project will continue in the fall of 2007 with an emphasis on capturing adult spawning ready lake whitefish and their eggs. Setlines will also be fished to continue collecting information about the river resident stock of lake sturgeon in the Detroit River.

This effort provided a unique opportunity to create new partnerships with both governmental and non-governmental agencies to achieve common Great Lakes management objectives. Maintaining these collaborative relationships allows for the most efficient use of limited human and fiscal resources. This project is consistent with the "Partnerships and Accountability", "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management", and "Leadership in Science and Technology" focus areas of the Fisheries Program's Vision for the Future.

St. Marys River Fishery Task Group Meeting

*Submitted by Anjanette Bowen
Fishery Biologist*

The St. Marys River Fishery Task Group (SMRFTG) met on May 15, 2007 in Brimley, Michigan at the Bay Mills Indian Casino and Resort. Major agenda items included the Lake Superior State University (LSSU) fish and wildlife beneficial use impairment (BUI) delisting criteria project, a review of preliminary analysis of the 2006 fish community assessment data, and review of the annual fall walleye recruitment



electrofishing data. The meeting was hosted by Joshua Parish of the Bay Mills Indian Community.

Greg Zimmerman, LSSU, provided an overview of a delisting criteria project that has received Michigan DEQ funding and was seeking volunteers from the group to sit on the Technical Committee they will be assembling. This committee would review existing historical fish and wildlife population and habitat information and formulate restoration projects. The information generated by the Technical Committee will be taken to Stakeholders in the fall.

Dave Fielder, MDNR, provided a preliminary analysis of the riverwide fish community assessment that was conducted by the SMRFTG in August 2006. He provided a breakdown of the trends and abundance of major sport species including walleye, yellow perch, lake herring, smallmouth bass, and northern pike. The information will be presented to the Lake Huron Technical Committee at their summer meeting in July and a final report will be written by the task group that will be published on the Great Lakes Fishery Commission's web site. For the 2002 report, Population Dynamics of the St. Marys River Fish Community 1975-2002, view the Publications and Products link on the Lake Huron committee's page of the Commission's website at <http://www.glfsc.org/lakecom/lhc/lhchome.php#pub>.

Greg Wright, CORA, provided a data summary of the annual fall walleye recruitment electrofishing survey. He found that the mean benchmark CPE of walleye was 6.7 fish/hour electrofishing. The data also indicated that stocked hatchery fish comprise approximately 1/3 of walleye captured from the river. There was some discussion regarding the minimal incorporation of this information into the Walleye Stocking and Evaluation plan that is currently being reviewed by the Lake Huron Committee.

Creel clerks will be working a number of areas of the river this summer to gather harvest data. The MDNR will have a clerk on the lower reaches of the river and OMNR will have two clerks on the river, one surveying the rainbow trout fishery in the lower rapids and one surveying Lake George and the St. Joseph Channel. They will also be conducting a creel survey of the lake herring fishery near St. Joseph Island.

Partnerships are an integral part of the Service Fishery Program's Vision for the Future and is addressed in the "Partnerships and Accountability" component of the plan.

Lake Sturgeon Recovery Efforts Highlighted in IMAX Documentary

***Submitted by Jim Boase
Fishery Biologist***

It has been five years since researchers from the Alpena FRO, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, USGS, DTE Energy, and Purdy Fisheries met with IMAX Film Producer David Lickley of Science North to discuss the idea of a Great Lakes Documentary. David Lickley first came to the Port Huron/Sarnia area after reading in *The Toronto Star* newspaper about the lake sturgeon

research that had been taking place there in 2002. At that time, Alpena FRO was working with the listed partners above on a number of lake sturgeon projects including identifying adult spawning and juvenile nursery habitats located in the St. Clair River. David's interest was to capture some of our findings on film for his documentary "Wonders of the Great Lakes" which is scheduled to be released in May 2008.

David described the clarity of the waters at Port Huron as "perfect for capturing this type of footage". The filming took place in two phases in the upper St. Clair River in the Port Huron/Sarnia area. The goal during the first phase was to capture the act of lake sturgeon spawning in the St. Clair River. Lake sturgeon spawning in this area generally takes place over just one or two days so timing was critical. As the days approached, correspondence with local diver/underwater film makers Greg and Kathy Lashbrook was critical in providing feedback on when the sturgeon would be spawning this year. As temperatures were



Photo- B. Kavetsky, USFWS

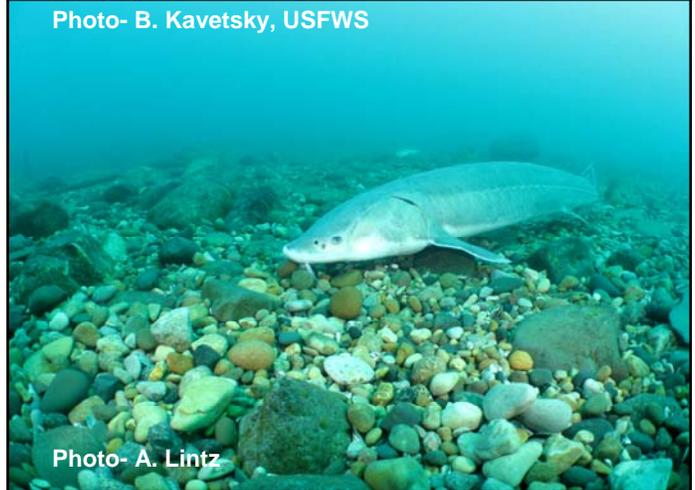


Photo- A. Lintz

approaching optimum for lake sturgeon spawning, the underwater film crew from Science North arrived in Sarnia on May 29, 2007. The crew was lead by Filmmaker/Underwater Cameraman Nick Caloyianis. Filming began on May 29th and took place in the narrows below the Blue Water Bridge of the St Clair River. At that location hundreds of lake sturgeon come each year to spawn. The site is know for its fast flowing clear waters, rock covered bottom, and is littered with shipwrecks which provide refuge from the current for lake sturgeon during spawning. The site also happens to be in the center of the shipping lane for Great Lakes freighter traffic.

The camera used for the underwater portion of the film weighs almost 300 pounds at the surface but when submerged is almost neutrally buoyant. Film canisters for the underwater IMAX Camera each hold 1,000 feet of film which produces only about 5 minutes of film time, thus requiring many trips in and out of the water. Alpena FRO provided use of their research vessel, the *Sentinel*, which has a cabled trawling winch to assist with moving the camera in and out of the water during the filming. Spawning took place on May 31 and the crew was able to capture some great footage of the spawning activity. The second phase of filming took place on June 25 and focused on operations requiring capturing and implanting lake sturgeon for telemetry work that the Alpena FRO has been leading in this region of the Great Lakes.

The project was funded through the Service's Coastal Grant Program and was highlighted in the local newspaper and can be seen at:

<http://www.thetimesherald.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070601/NEWS01/706010310/1002>.

This collaborative effort provided an excellent opportunity to broadcast to a large public audience and provided an opportunity to explain the Service's mission and the role that Alpena FRO plays in providing assistance for management of Great Lakes fish and wildlife resources. Specifically, information was provided about the efforts of the Service and its partners to rehabilitate native lake sturgeon populations in the Great Lakes and the role that Alpena FRO has in this endeavor. This effort supports the "Partnerships and Accountability" and "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management" priorities of the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.



Open Rivers Initiative Meetings

*Submitted by Susan Wells
Fishery Biologist*

During the week of June 18, 2007, Biologists Wells from the Alpena FRO, and Cogswell and Westerhof from the Green Bay FRO attended the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) joint Lake Huron and Lake Michigan Basin Team meeting in Roscommon, Michigan and the Michigan Trout Unlimited (TU) quarterly meeting in Cadillac, Michigan. A brief overview of the National Fish



Passage Program (NFPP) was provided, but the main objective was to discuss potential funding for the Open Rivers Initiative (ORI). An additional \$6 million was requested by the Administration to be added to the NFPP for implementation of the ORI, a multi agency effort to emphasize the removal of small dams and restore fish passage. Availability of this additional funding, to be used for engineering and geomorphology design of projects, would greatly benefit the NFPP and would assist in providing additional barrier inventories for the Fish Passage Decision Support System. Discussion of focusing efforts and identifying priorities within the two Great Lakes basins occurred at the two meetings and was well received. Follow up on potential projects will occur as the deadline for 2008 NFPP submission approaches.

This is an example of collaboration between federal and state government and non-profit agencies. Collaboration on aquatic habitat restoration efforts will enhance fish passage within Michigan. This project addresses the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future priorities of "Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management" and "Partnerships and Accountability".

St. Marys River Lake Sturgeon Telemetry Project

Submitted by Scott Koproski
Fishery Biologist

During the month of June 2007, Fishery Biologist Scott Koproski made four trips to Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan to work with Lake Superior State University (LSSU) on the St. Marys River lake sturgeon telemetry project. Koproski has applied for funds from the National Fish and Wildlife foundation to continue telemetry work that began in 2006. The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation has delayed notifying grantees of their selections but both Lake Superior State University and Alpena FRO felt it was important to push ahead with the project. LSSU has absorbed most of the field work related to this project and began deploying set-lines in the middle of May.



Last year a total of 12 lake sturgeon met the minimum length requirements necessary for implanting the sonic telemetry tags. While working with LSSU this year Koproski was able to implant two more adult lake sturgeon. He was also able to provide training to Brandon Gerig on the surgery and suture techniques. Mr. Gerig is a LSSU student who was responsible for coordinating all of LSSU's field activities for this project. Since the training, Mr. Gerig was able to implant five more adult lake sturgeon. This brings the total number of implanted fish to 19.

All 19 fish have been located throughout this past summer on a fairly regular basis. This has been quite surprising and is leading us to think that there may be a resident population of lake sturgeon within the St. Marys River. Movement up stream and down stream in excess of 8 miles has been documented but the fish always seem to return to the Lake George area in the northern reaches of the river. Further investigations into the habitat selections have begun and we hope to identify critical habitat needs of these fish.

This work is an example of Alpena FRO's commitment to the following Fisheries Program Vision Priorities: "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management" and "Partnership and Accountability".

Near Shore Fish Study Continues on the Detroit and St. Clair Rivers

*Submitted by Jim Boase
Fishery Biologist*

As part of the Service's Challenge Cost Share Grant Program (CCS) Biologists from Alpena NFWCO, Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge (Refuge), Michigan DNR Lake Erie Management Unit, Michigan DNR Lake St. Clair Research Station, and USGS Great Lakes Science Center teamed up to conduct the third annual fishery survey in the Huron Erie Corridor (HEC). This year most of the assessment took place on the St. Clair River Delta while a portion of the survey was conducted in the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. The last time a similar survey was conducted in



those areas of the Great Lakes was in the early 1980's. Since that time many changes have taken place, specifically the loss of wetland areas and the addition of aquatic invasive species, both of which have likely displaced and or reduced the numbers and diversity of native fish species.

The boundaries of the HEC begin at the headwaters of the St. Clair River and extend through the western Lake Erie basin. The primary goal with this comprehensive assessment of the HEC was to provide baseline information about what species, both native and exotic, are using some of the last remaining wetland complexes found within the HEC. The first survey took place in September 2005 with efforts focusing on wetland areas located along western Lake Erie. In 2006 efforts focused on Michigan waters of the lower Detroit River focusing on near shore areas. In 2007 we returned to some of the locations at the northern boundary of the Refuge and then also surveyed the St. Clair River Delta.

These nearshore areas provide some of the last remaining natural wetland areas available in the HEC. The information gained from these assessments have then been used to assist managers and regulators at both the Federal and State level to broker management agreements with landowners falling within the Refuge boundaries or have provided insight into the value of the resources for regulation purposes. What has been demonstrated is that the nearshore areas are critical to the early life stages of many species of sport fish as well as some state listed species. Historical records from past surveys had identified over thirty species of fish using those wetland habitats for either spawning or nursery areas.

This year we captured over 13,000 fish representing 53 species from 17 families. Effort included 21 electrofishing sites, 25 fyke net locations and 15 seine hauls, most of which took place in the St. Clair River Delta. Results from this study have been presented and well received at the State of the Strait Meeting and at the Annual Huron Erie Corridor Steering Committee Meeting held at the

Great Lakes Science Center. This comprehensive survey is a critical first step in identifying the current status of fish species within the HEC and the newly created Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge and will aid the Refuge with implementing its Comprehensive Conservation Plan.

This effort provided a unique opportunity to create new partnerships with both governmental and non-governmental agencies to achieve common Great Lakes management objectives. Maintaining these collaborative relationships allows for the most efficient use of limited human and fiscal resources. This project is consistent with the “Partnerships and Accountability”, “Aquatic Species Conservation and Management”, and “Leadership in Science and Technology” focus areas of the Fisheries Program’s Vision for the Future.

Fish Capturing for Indian Springs Underwater Viewing Dome

*Submitted by Jim McFee
Fishery Biologist*

On September 20, 2007 Service Biologist Jim McFee assisted Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) Fisheries Technicians with the capture of fish for transplant to Indian Springs Metropark. Fish were captured from Pontiac Lake in Southeast Michigan and moved to the newly constructed pond at the Indian Springs Environmental Discovery Center. The center constructed a 1.7 acre pond complete with logs and vegetation for fish habitat. The unique feature of the pond is an underwater viewing dome attached to the Discovery Center. A 20 foot tunnel leads visitors out into a dome 9 feet high and 20 feet in diameter. The tunnel and dome are constructed of high strength acrylic offering visitors a view of the underwater habitat.

MDNR Fisheries Technicians and Service Biologist McFee used electrofishing to capture the desired species for the transplant. Captured species consisted of largemouth bass, bluegill, pumpkinseed, yellow perch, walleye, rock bass, black crappie, and bowfin. Sand shiners, spotfin shiner, and bluntnose minnows were also captured as a forage base in the pond. After sorting fish by species and size the fish were loaded into a planting trailer and transported



to the viewing pond at Indian Springs Metropark. Upon arrival fish were successfully planted into the pond. The MDNR Technicians performed another capturing event, using trapnets, during the week of October 15th to increase the number of fish in the pond.

The underwater viewing dome offers an excellent outreach opportunity for both children and adults. The Discovery Center offers free admission after paying the park entrance fee. The Center includes other ecosystem and habitat related educational tools and is staffed with knowledgeable Naturalists. Naturalists say that they host many school and scout groups throughout the year, with several hundred people viewing the center and underwater dome on a weekly basis. This is another great example of utilizing partnerships to achieve the important goal of outreach.

This effort provided a unique opportunity to create new partnerships with both governmental and non-governmental agencies to achieve common management objectives. Maintaining these collaborative relationships allows for the most efficient use of limited human and fiscal resources. This project is consistent with the "Partnerships and Accountability", "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management", and "Leadership in Science and Technology" focus areas of the Fisheries Program's Vision for the Future.

Alpena NFWCO participates in Lake Huron Binational Partnership Meeting

*Submitted by Jerry McClain
Fishery Biologist*

Project Leader McClain participated in a Lake Huron Binational Partnership (LHBP) meeting on September 20-21, 2007 in Alpena, Michigan. The LHBP is being led by Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Environment Canada and Ontario Ministry of Environment (MOE) with participation from multiple partners including the Service, Michigan Department on Natural Resources (MDNR), and Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (OMNR).

In 2002, federal, state, and provincial agencies involved in the management of environmental issues in Lake Huron endorsed the formation of the LHBP. This partnership builds on efforts initiated by the Michigan DEQ - Office of the Great Lakes in their Lake Huron Initiative (LHI). Priority actions were identified by the LHI to address use impairments, critical pollutants, habitat, and biodiversity and included these actions in an Action Plan developed in 2000. The Action Plan was updated in 2002. These activities are now being addressed by the LHBP.

Three initial binational issues have been agreed upon by the partners and include; contaminants in fish and wildlife, biodiversity and ecosystem change, and fish and wildlife habitat. The September meeting was convened to discuss agency activities and future collaborative efforts needed to address concerns in the Lake Huron basin. A progress report of ongoing activities is being developed and participation by all current partners is being sought to complete the report.



A follow-up meeting of U.S. partners is scheduled for October 11 to discuss ongoing agency activities for inclusion in the progress report. The Alpena NFWCO will participate in that meeting as well to update the partnership on office/agency activities in Lake Huron. Service participation in the Lake Huron Binational Partnership will assist the collaborative effort to address and rectify environmental issues in the Lake Huron basin. The effort is consistent with and supportive of the “Partnerships and Accountability”, “Aquatic Species Conservation and Management”, and “Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management” priorities of the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

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