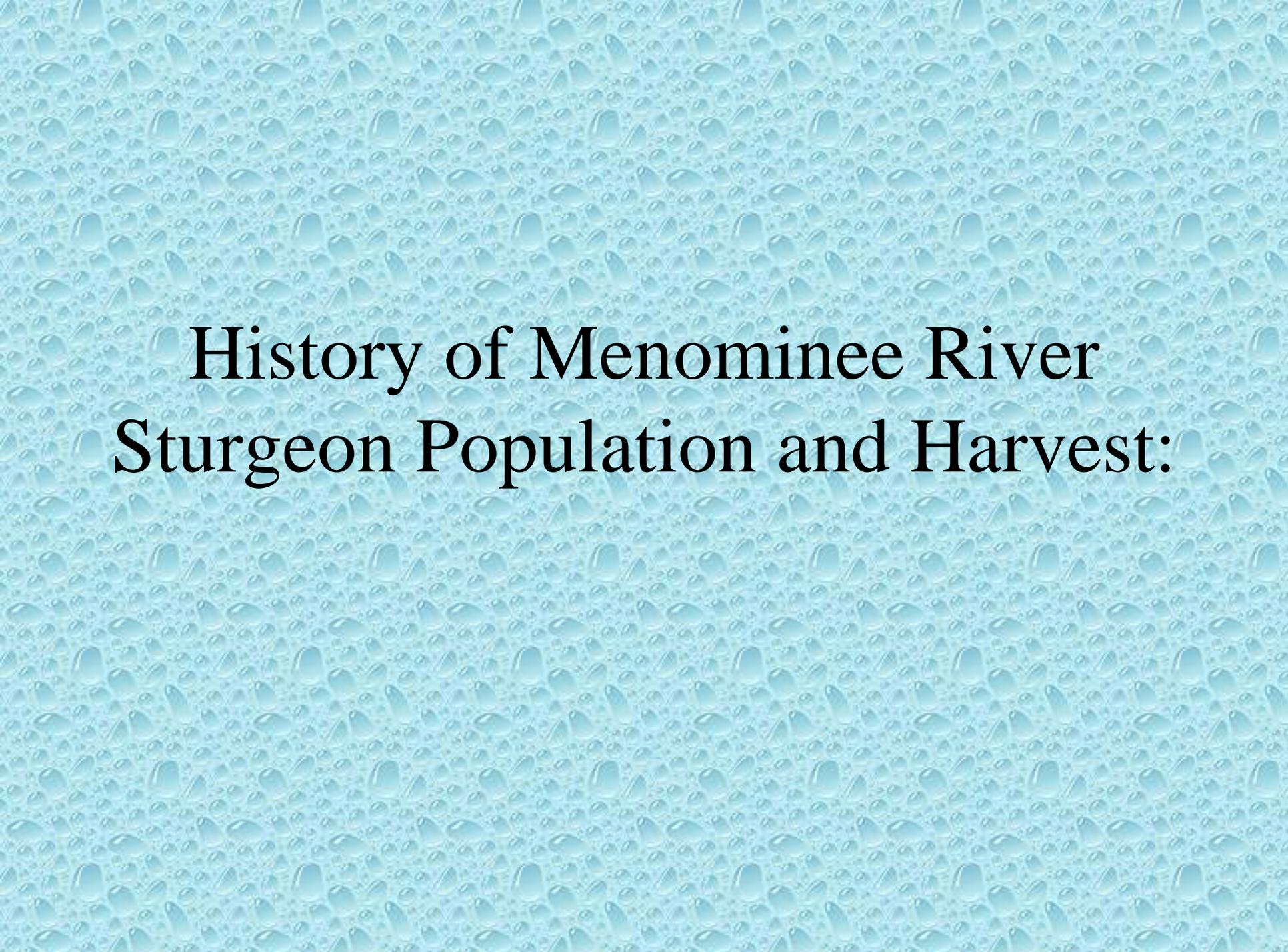


Sturgeon Enforcement on the  
Menominee River  
Trends and Techniques

A man in a uniform, identified as Mike Kitt, is kneeling on a concrete pier. He is holding a large, dark fish, possibly a salmon, with both hands. The pier is situated over a body of blue water. The man is wearing a dark cap with a logo, a light-colored short-sleeved shirt with patches, and dark pants. The background shows the pier structure and the water.

By: Mike Kitt - Marine  
Enforcement Warden - Marinette



# History of Menominee River Sturgeon Population and Harvest:

# History of the fishery

- Traditionally, Native Americans harvested lake sturgeon from the Menominee River and Green Bay.
- State licensed fishermen over-harvest of the resource and habitat degradation led to the closure of the fishery until 1946.
- Jointly managed fishery with Michigan.
- The agencies began to allow a hook and line fishery in 1946.



Whitefish River

Cedar River

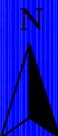
Menominee River

Peshtigo River

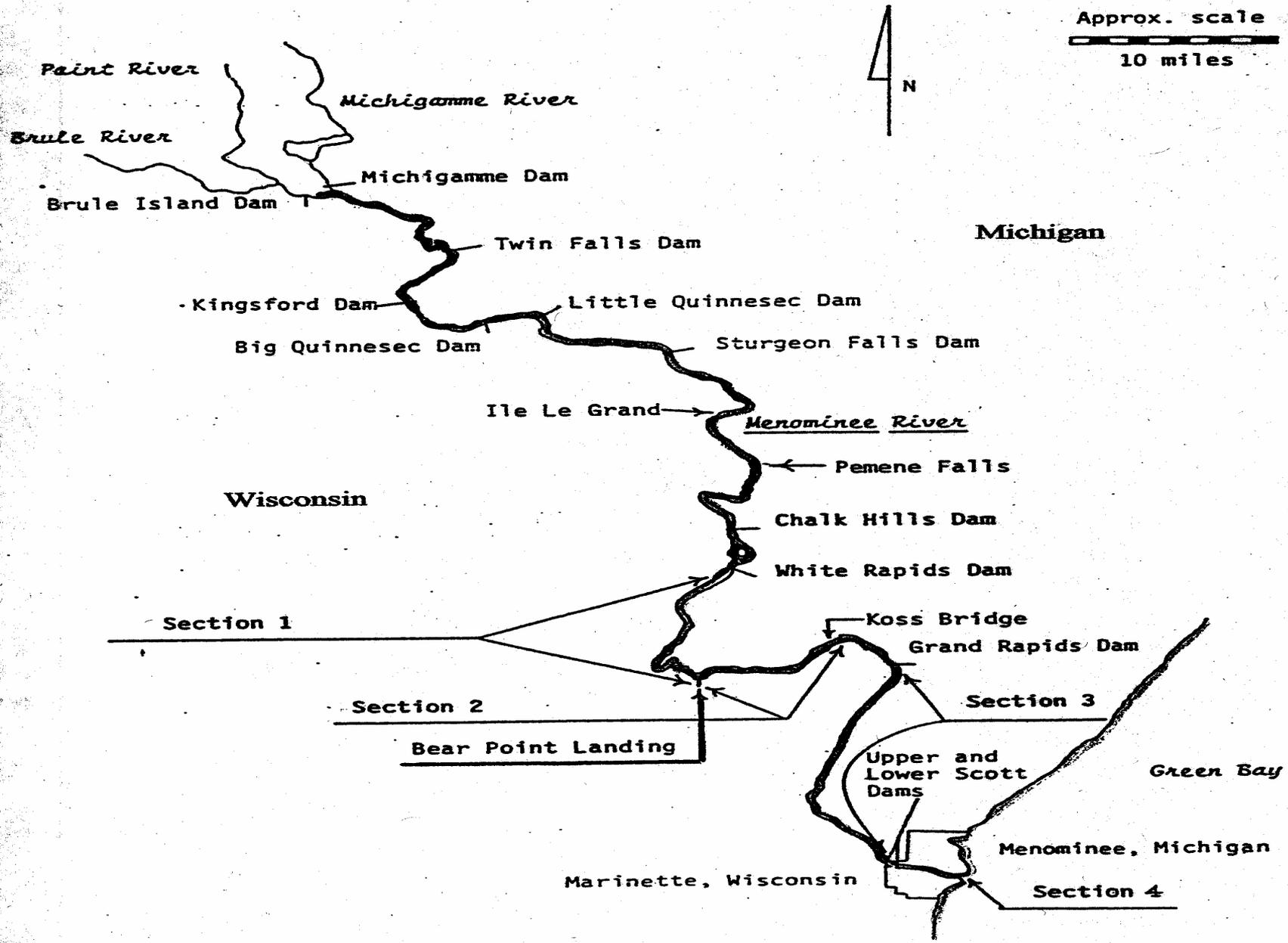
Oconto River

Fox River

Lake Michigan



# Menominee River



# M E N O M I N E E R I V E R S T U R G E O N H A R V E S T B Y S E C T I O N

| YEAR           | SECTION 1,2,& 3 | SECTION 4  | GRAND TOTAL |
|----------------|-----------------|------------|-------------|
| 1983           | 18              | 1          | 19          |
| 1984           | 12              | 1          | 13          |
| 1985           | 14              | 2          | 16          |
| 1986           | 23              | 12         | 35          |
| 1987           | 35              | 23         | 58          |
| 1988           | 37              | 22         | 59          |
| 1989           | 60              | 20         | 80          |
| 1990           | 31              | 22         | 53          |
| 1991           | 28              | 33         | 61          |
| 1992           | 26              | 46         | 72          |
| 1993           | 47              | 40         | 87          |
| 1994           | 25              | 29         | 54          |
| 1995           | 28              | 49         | 77          |
| 1996           | 40              | 32         | 72          |
| 1997           | 43              | 36         | 79          |
| 1998           | 55              | 54         | 109         |
| 1999           | 70*             | 97         | 167         |
| 2000           | 0               | 0          | 0           |
| 2001           | 67              | 118        | 185         |
| 2002           | 0               | 0          | 0           |
| 2003           | 55              | 155*       | 210         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   |                 |            |             |
| <b>HARVEST</b> | <b>714</b>      | <b>792</b> | <b>1506</b> |

\*High harvest year since sturgeon registration began in 1983

# Lake Sturgeon Harvest Summary

- Mandatory registration of harvested fish began in 1983 and kill was 19.
- By 1992 kill increased to 72.
- And 1999 kill increased to 167.
- 2000, 2002, and 2004 were zero harvest years with a 70" size limit.
- 2001 (185), 2003 (210), and 2005 (172) with a 50" size limit.

# Lake Sturgeon Fishing Regulations

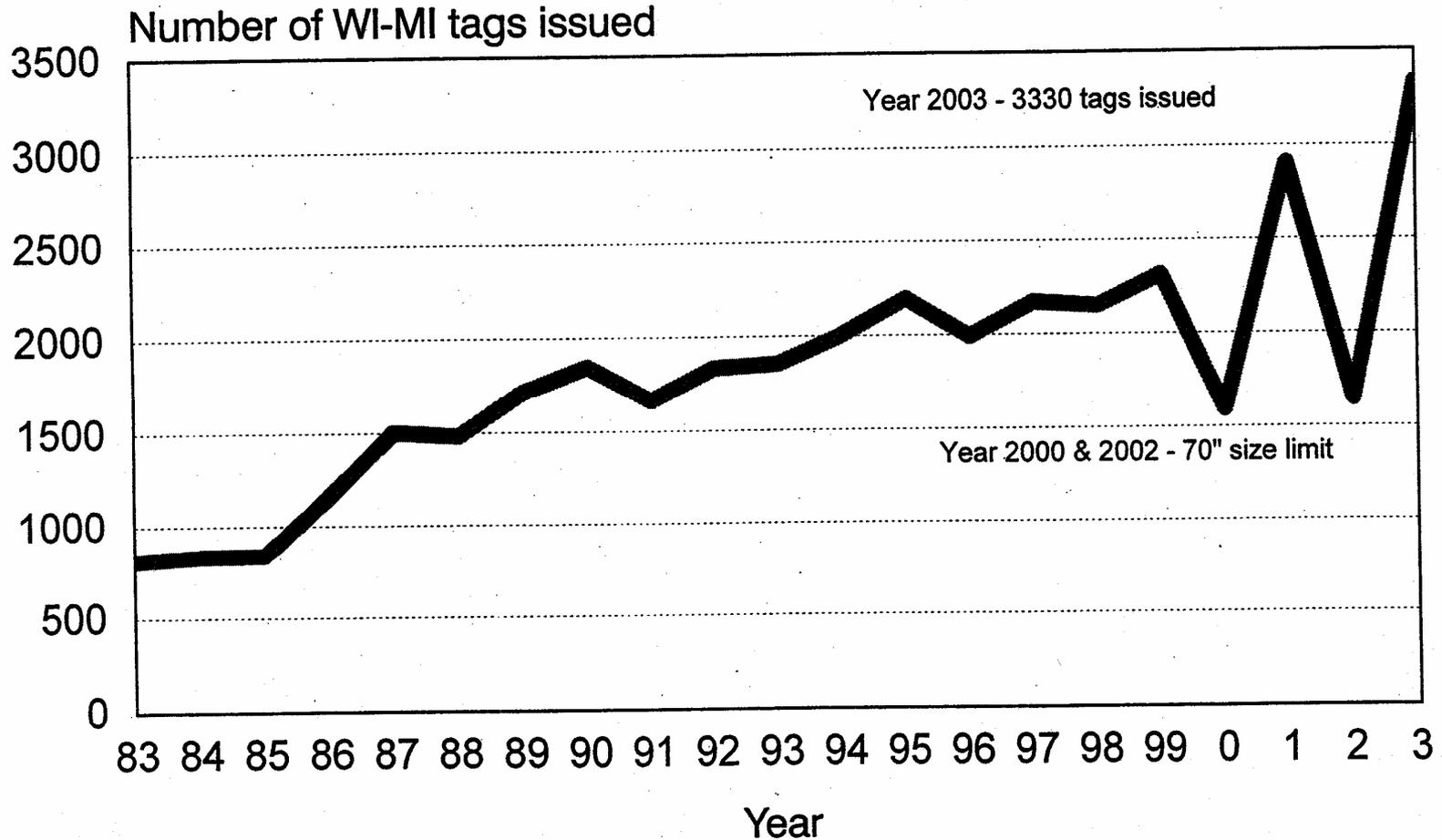
- 1946-52 5 per season size limit 30"
- 1953-62 3 " " 30"
- 1963-73 2 " " 42"
- 1974-91 2 " " 50"
- 1992-99 1 " " 50"
- 2000,02,04 1 " 70"
- 2001,03,05 1 " 50"
- 2006\* 1 " 60"

# Hook and Line Regulations Prior to 2006 Season:

- Season : 1st. Saturday in September to October 30th.
- Person may obtain 2 sturgeon tags free of charge. One for Inland open waters only. One for Wis./Mich. Boundary Waters only.
- Odd years: 50” minimum size.
- Even years: 70” minimum size.
- Can fish around the clock.
- Can use up to 3 lines per person - can lead to user conflict.

# Menominee River

## Sturgeon Fishing Pressure 1983 - 2003



Wisconsin required tags beginning in 1983, Michigan in 1986

# Regulations Cont'd.:

- Fish must be registered within 24 hrs. of catching. Only 6 registration stations currently operating.
- Tags may not be loaned or borrowed - Must put **your** tag on **your** fish.
- No snagging or foul-hooking.
- Tags must be immediately validated and attached.

# Profile of Anglers:

- 80% are Eastern Europeans (mostly Polish - followed by Russian, Lithoanian, Czech.) from the greater Chicago area.



# Angler Profile Cont'd.

- Very close - knit.
- Very leery of people they don't know.
- Very wary and fearful of Law Enforcement.
- Very loyal to their sport.
- Most have financial means to come up often (skilled trades).
- Very "hardy" people.

# Angler Profile Cont'd.:

- 10 % “Fox Valley” area (Sturgeon Spearers)
- 5 % “locals”.
- 5 % “other areas”.
- Can get very crowded (conversation with Mario Gasowski).

# Enforcement Techniques:

- Surveillance, surveillance, surveillance!!!
- - sparked by attendance of Lk. Mich. Basin Sturgeon Management Seminar in 2003.
- - driven by budget cuts (low mileage) in 2003.
- Good Fish and Game Cop intuition - knowing unusual or erratic behavior.

# Enforcement Techniques Cont'd.:

- Good help - reliable Officers with skill and **patience!**
- Good interview skills: very difficult to get them to tell the truth.
- Getting to know the participants:
  - - let them see you upon occasion.
  - - stop and visit with them.
  - - tell them you are the “Straznyk Ryb”.

# Enforcement Techniques Cont'd.:

- Help from local sport shop:
  - - education - laws and expectations while they are here.
- Citizen Involvement (Fish Patrol)

Guardians of the River



FISH PATROL





# Case Review – 2003 Season:

- Wolkosz: Failure to tag - turned over to Michigan for prosecution - \$180.00



## Case Review Cont'd.:

- Danko/Cison - failure to immediately tag sturgeon - 2 counts, warning for undersize fish. \$1,000.00 total.



## Case Review Cont'd.:

- Rejolak/Kutek - Loan and borrow sturgeon tag, over bag limit. \$1,073.00.





## Case Review Cont'd.:

- Swiderski - Fail to tag - \$517.00



## Case Review Cont'd.:

- Surma - Fail to tag: party to... - \$550.75  
(reduced) Only case to go to trial.





## Case Review Cont'd.:

- Gasowski - turned over to Michigan - snag fish - \$180.00.





## Case Review Cont'd.:

- Pilny - fail to tag, snag fish. \$715.00.





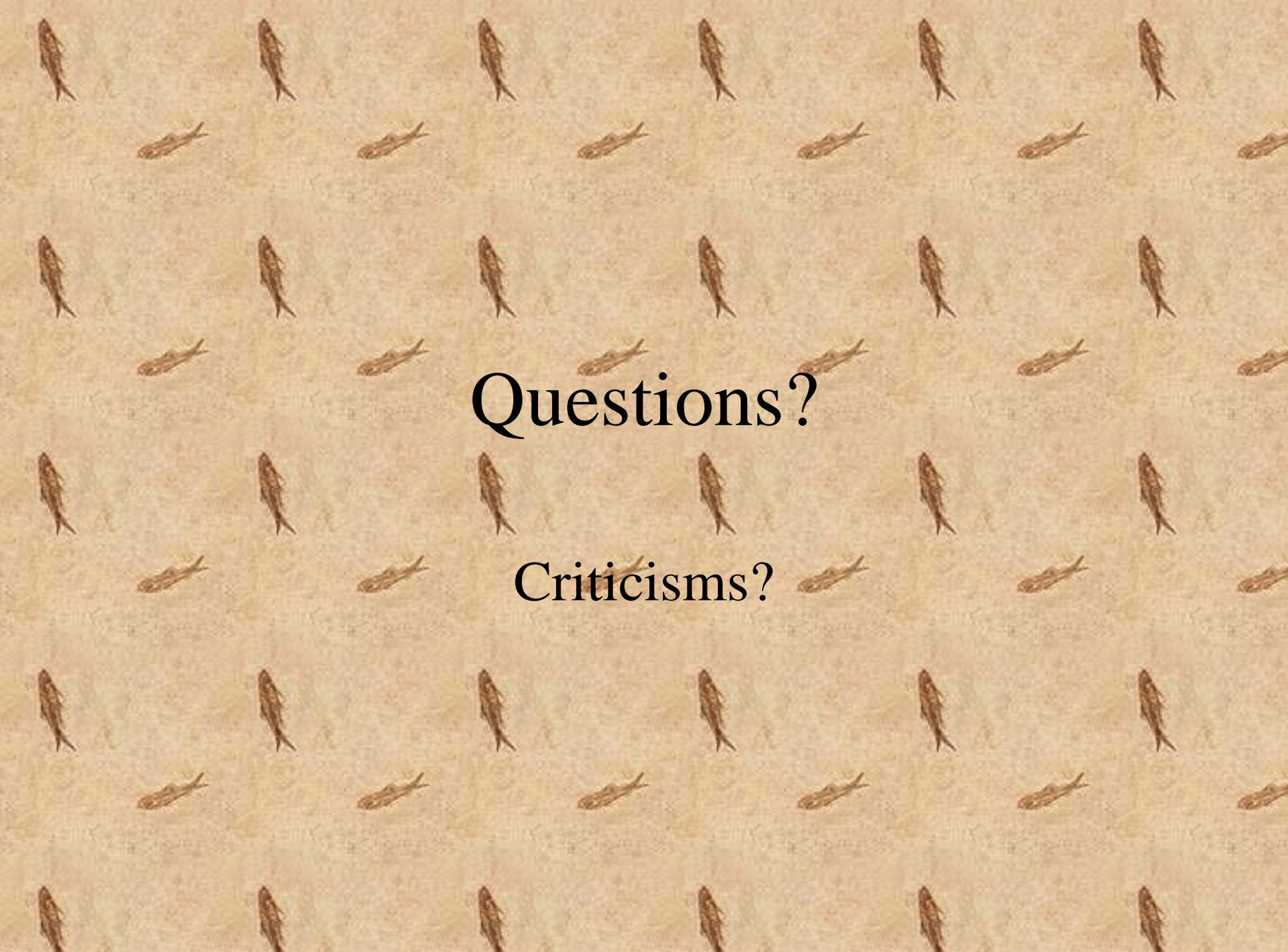


# Season Synopsis 2003:

- 11 cases on 9 individuals.
- Total fines - \$4,214.75.
- Fish released - 6.

# Where Do We Go From Here?

- Seek rule changes. Modified in 2006.
- Education (pamphlet).
- Citizen Involvement (Fish Patrol)
- Continue to monitor harvest **closely**.
- Continue to review season and harvest.



Questions?

Criticisms?