

Conservation



Dan Kiefer
Metro-West Member

Getting Involved With Conservation Issues

If you're like me, there is an issue affecting your angling interests that "gets your goat." There are so many things that affect the health and future of fishing... fishing regulations; conservation issues; public health; conflicting demands on our lakes and rivers. Tracking down the facts is never easy. And, all too often, it seems that decisions are made without the best interests of fish and fishing in mind.

At the June Board meeting, I talked about the importance of getting involved with the conservation and protection of our Michigan waters. I think that fishermen need to be more involved with fishing and waterway related subjects than they are. It really is a case of "the squeaky wheel gets the oil."

Our Club is more involved with fishing issues than most of the other fishing organizations that I'm aware of. We have good connections with MUCC and MSSFA, and our reps (John Wright and Lenard Pietila) provide an avenue of information about some of the current issues.

From there, the next step is up to us...you and I. Nothing is more frustrating than being concerned about an aspect of fishing and not know where or who to talk to about it. "Better to light one candle than to curse the darkness." When you have a comment or question about a fishing issue, who are you going to call? Well, it isn't Ghostbusters!

I encourage you to speak-up. Believe me, I guarantee you that hearing from fishermen about issues affecting fish and fishing does make a difference! As the old saying goes, "Get involved...the world is run by those who show up." Well, fishermen can "show up" just by a timely phone call or letter or email. There are two sides to every issue...how often do you think that the side having to do with fish and fishing is well represented when the final decision is made?

There are so many issues affecting fish and fishing that all MWS members are not going to agree on every one of them. But, by knowing where to go for more information and then knowing who to call, you can follow-up on the issue that matters to you the most.

What's your issue? Is it cormorant control?...angling regulations?...water withdrawal legislation?...invasive species control on the Great Lakes?...issues affecting one of our tournament ports? With a few simple tools, it is really no-hassle to express your opinion/concern to the right person at the right time.

First, what are the current issues? And, what are the facts? I start with the websites for our two sportsmen affiliations:



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Michigan Steelhead & Salmon Fishermen's Association:

www.michigansteelheaders.org

Michigan United Conservation Clubs:

www.mucc.org

Next, who do you call? Here are two websites that will give you name and contact information...just by typing in your zip code:

State Legislature:

http://house.michigan.gov/find_a_rep.asp

U.S. Congress:

www.vote-smart.org or www.usa.gov/Contact/Elected.shtml

Michigan DNR Fisheries Division:

http://www.michigan.gov/documents/FisheriesDiv_142504_7.htm

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service:

<http://www.fws.gov/duspit/contactus.htm>

I am often asked, "Great, Dan...but what do I say? I'm not an expert at this." Don't worry, you don't have to be. Just be yourself...a concerned citizen...a fisherman who has first-hand knowledge about the Great Lakes and Michigan's rivers and the billion-dollar industry that we represent to the state's economy.

- State your concern
- Tell them why you think it's important to do something about the issue
- Ask them to tell you what they are doing about it
- Be respectful

I am proud to be a member of MWS. It still amazes me how active the Club is...the tournament schedule, the community/conservation efforts, the boat/fishing show participation. I have estimated the economic activity that is generated by the MWS tournaments...it's over \$100,000 annually! This Club knows what it's talking about when it comes to fishing and Great Lakes issues. It is an important voice that should be heard more often in order to protect the future of the fishing that we all like.

I have offered to help the Board on any given issue that it wants to look into on behalf of MWS Club as a whole. And, I would be happy to help you speak-up on any issue that you care about. Who to call...how to find the facts...what to say.

Send me an email or call anytime:

dckeifer@comcast.net;

248.342.8795.

