

# A once in a lifetime opportunity to improve Michigan fisheries

## Governor's Proposed DNR Budget Highlights

Jim Dexter, MDNR Fisheries Chief, stressed that the Governor's proposed budget is an extraordinarily good budget proposal which will allow most of Fisheries Division's aging infrastructure to finally be upgraded.

### Fishery survey equipment and related items:

Since much of the survey and monitoring equipment in Fisheries Division is old and worn-out, efforts will be made to upgrade or replace boats, motors, trailers, electronics, shop tools, monitoring equipment, nets, and other items needed for field and lab work. Normally, each year Fisheries Division only is provided about \$100,000 annually for such infrastructure upgrades but the proposal is designating \$1.5 million for these upgrades.

### Replacement of the Lake Michigan Research Vessel, the Steelhead:

The proposal would allocate \$4 million from the general fund with no matching funds required for the replacement of the DNR Lake Michigan Research Vessel. The aging *R/V Steelhead* needs much work and because of its age, replacement parts are very difficult to obtain. This will be the last major upgrade to the DNR's Great Lakes research vessel fleet which will be completely modernized with a lifespan of over 50 years.

### Hatchery infrastructure upgrades

The proposal designates \$30 million for infrastructure upgrades of the six DNR fish hatcheries. This would modernize the aging systems resulting in more reliable fish production at less energy costs. Some of the items that will be improved include:

- The cold-water facilities at the Wolf State Fish Hatchery will be separated from the cool-water operations. Each section will have separate water supplies that will reduce the chances of disease transmission between the two sections of the hatchery. The ponds will be upgraded and there will be more room to raise minnows to feed fall fingerling walleyes. These upgrades will enhance walleye and muskellunge rearing production.
- Well upgrades and maintenance
- New electrical systems
- Resurfacing the concrete raceways with epoxy to seal them to prevent growth of disease organisms
- Upgrade heaters and heating systems. This is in addition to a separate ongoing \$3 million project to install solar panels at several hatcheries to save energy costs that can be substantial at the hatcheries.
- Replace the old pumps with new pumps that can be throttled to deal with changing demands.
- Effluent system upgrades
- Pond maintenance and sediment removal
- Roof upgrades
- Parking lot improvements
- Other needed work.

### Tribal Coordination Unit:

Since the Tribal management activities are in the interest of all the public, efforts have been made to obtain general fund money. The work has been increasing and two years ago \$150,000 of general funding was obtained to help support hiring Steve Lenart, fishery biologist. The current \$650,000 request is for up to 4 staff including, 2 biologists and 2 technicians.