April 27, 2021

The EUPCAC and WUPCAC has become aware the Governor Whitmer’s budget, is calling for 30 million dollars of federal relief money, to be appropriated to the DNR fisheries hatchery system. We agree with Fisheries Chief James Dexter that this will be a “Once in a Life time opportunity to improve the DNR’s fisheries infrastructure.” If approved by the legislature, monies will be available to upgrade long antiquated hatchery facilities.

We have reviewed the list of items that the fish division has proposed for the spending of this money. We’re glad to see the governors support for fisheries in the State of Michigan. We also are glad the Fisheries Division will be able to upgrade the hatcheries. Without trying to take away from the need for hatcheries improvements, we feel additional infrastructure for walleye rearing is being overlooked and needs to be part of the infrastructure upgrade.

Of the approximate 10 million dollars allotted annually for rearing fish, it is our understanding that approximately three percent of that money is going towards rearing walleyes. $300,000.00 Over the last 15 or so years the number of U.P. inland waters stocked was slashed until just a handful of stocked lakes remained. The reason given at the time was for a study for the Bays DeNoc requiring all or almost all of the spring walleye fingerlings from the management unit. Later we were told those tribal negotiations required the DNR to stock the Bays DeNoc very heavily.

The end results of those actions have resulted in lost fishing opportunities for anglers in the Upper Peninsula. Locals and vacationers alike are very disappointed that the DNR has failed to stock fingerlings at adequate levels. The new released DNR Inland Walleye Management Plan states the DNR can’t afford to stock walleyes as had been done in the past. What really is bothersome is the DNR is only spending approximately $26,000.00 annually for spring fingerlings on the inland waters of the U.P.

It is our understanding that a pond to raise minnows downstate, to feed walleye fingerlings for fall stocking, is one line item dealing with walleyes. We feel there is room for much improvement. The DNR Fisheries has told us for years, if they had the money, they would make corrections. We think this is the time to re-invest in walleye management.

The EUPCAC and the WUPCAC respectfully requests that the Fisheries Division modify their 30-million-dollar hatchery windfall budget to include monies to enhance walleye fisheries especially those in the Upper Peninsula.

1. New lined drainable ponds should be added. These ponds should provide better fish survival while reducing manhours needed to harvest spring fingerlings.
2. Add ponds to rear minnows to allow for rearing of fall fingerlings.

Thank You for the opportunity to express our concerns.

NRC -

DNR Director -

Fisheries Chief – James Dexter