

Fisheries Oversight Committee Proposed License Restructure

Background

1. The DNR Fisheries Division has not had increased funding since 2014.
2. Inflation coupled with the legal requirement for the Fisheries Division to maintain a balanced budget, has forced a number of cuts to personnel, field offices, research, and asset maintenance. The DNR used to have 270 full-time employees, which has been reduced to under 170 today to balance their budget.
3. The Fisheries Division is facing a budget deficit that will require more program cuts in the future and would result in hatchery production and more stocking cuts. The DNR used to stock 40 million walleyes annually. In 2025, they stocked 19 million walleyes due to budget constraints.
4. In 2013, the Fisheries Division received 78% of fishing license revenue. That has dropped to 69% today. The remaining 31% goes to other non-fisheries' uses within the DNR.
5. When senior licenses were discounted to \$11 in 2014, the loss of \$3 million in revenue to the Fisheries Division was supposed to be back filled from the State of Michigan general fund. This funding has not been provided back to the Fisheries Division. There was a total loss of \$30 million for the Fisheries Division in the 10 years since this was enacted.
6. Legislation to substantially increase fishing and hunting license rates did not gain support to proceed and failed in December 2024. There was significant opposition due to the proposed cost of license increases.

Stakeholder Input and benefits to anglers

1. A group of concerned fishery stakeholders from across the State of Michigan, representing fishing organizations, charter and marine businesses and recreational anglers came together in January 2025 to create a new proposal to restructure fishing licenses to support fisheries, restore program cuts, avoid stocking reductions, and ensure transparency and trust for anglers.
2. The proposal has been introduced into the State Legislature as **House Bill 5093**. A key part of this is allocating more revenue from fishing licenses to the Fisheries Division. This allows for very small license fee increases of only \$2 for species not stocked by hatcheries.
3. Another key part of this proposal is improving opportunities for inland and Great Lakes anglers. This is done through a \$5 hatchery stamp that would be required to fish for species produced and stocked by the DNR. It will allow Great Lakes anglers to troll in boats for salmon, trout, and walleyes to use additional rods to optimize their trolling pattern. Creel limits will protect the resource from over-harvest. HB 5093 has formal support from these Great Lakes fishing organizations, businesses and tourist agencies:

- Michigan Anglers Consortium – Mark Williams
- Great Lakes Salmon Initiative – Ed Blissick
- Michigan Trout Unlimited- Dr. Bryan Burroughs
- Michigan Charter Boat Association – Karl Burnside
- Northwest Michigan Fishing Club – Mike Radcliffe
- Safari Club – Mike Leonard
- Lake Michigan Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee - Dennis Grinold
- Manistee County Sportfishing Association – Capt. Kevin Hughes
- Ludington Area Charter Boat Association – George Freeman
- Michigan Steelhead and Salmon Fisherman's Association – Dennis Eade

- Blue Water Sportfishing Association – Ben McNeice
- Jay's Sporting Goods – Bryan Darland
- Upper Peninsula Travel & Recreation Association – Tom Nemacheck
- Hammond Bay Area Anglers Association – Frank Krist
- Arenac County Walleye Club – Michael Veine
- Battle Creek Chapter of MSSFA – Jeff Root
- Manistique Area Sportfishing Club – Brett Tallman
- Muskegon Charter Boat Association – Capt. Terry Armstrong
- Michigan Boating Industry Association (MBIA) – Nicki Polan
- Lake Superior Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee – Capt. Travis White
- Detroit Steelheaders – Blaise Pewinski
- Michigan Muskie Alliance – Will Schultz
- St. Clair-Detroit River Sturgeon for Tomorrow – Blair Hughes
- South Haven Chapter of MSSFA – Richard Chapman
- Pentwater Sportfishing Association – Dean Jessop
- Eastern Michigan Sportsman – Greg Gumbrecht
- Coalition To Protect Michigan Resources -Tony Radjenovich
- Grand Haven Chapter of MSSFA – Paul Zelenka
- Southwest Michigan Chapter of MSSFA – Ryan McCartney
- South Shore Fishing Association – Jeremy Applekamp
- Michigan Spearfishing Association – Jonathan Durtka
- Marinette Menominee Great Lakes Sportfishing – Keith Waloway
- Captain Chucks II – Scott Keegstra
- Blood Run Tackle – Greg Mariuz
- Dreamweaver Lures – Capt. Shane Ruboyianes
- Yeck Lures – Ged Stryznski
- Traxstech – Jeff Miller
- Saugatuck Sportfishing Association – Holly Engel
- Holland Sportfishing Association – Hunter Engel

- Cannon Downriggers – Dave Engel
- Charlie's Fishing Hole and Tackle Shop – Charlie Broadhurst
- Raptor Trolling Flies – Jeff Bonin
- Keweenaw Economic Development Alliance – Jeff Ratcliffe
- Visit Keweenaw – Brad Barnett
- Magee Insurance – Randy Sarnowski
- Ludington Bay Brewery – Jamie Adam
- Reel to Reel Outdoors – Capt. Adam Knudsen
- Andersons Pro Bait – Joel Anderson
- Tournament Trail.Net – Scott MacDonald
- Hoosier Coho Club – Bruce Brown
- Haglund Floor Store – Glenn Haglund
- Fish Hawk Electronics – Trevor Sumption
- Fish On For Freedom – Jason Adam
- Jamesport Brewery – Julie MacDonald
- Ludington Meat Company – Alec Sanders
- Great Lakes Fisherman's Digest -John Bergsma
- Michigan Outdoors TV - Jimmy Gretzinger
- Shalvis Taxidermy – Robert Shalvis
- Mascot Reel Service - Scott Artenzinger
- MAC Rod Repair – Ed McCummbler
- Sekenske Marine – Chris Sekenske
- In Depth Precision Charters – Kurt Stracka
- Tribal Co-Management Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee - Capt. Mark Williams
- Fisheries Oversight Committee – Capt. Mark Williams
- Danish Brotherhood of Ludington- Ron Carmagno
- Fraternal Order of Eagles Aerie 1354 – Ron Carmagno
- Mike Avery's Outdoor Magazine Radio – Mike Avery
- Wolfs Marina – Win Wolf

- Tackle Haven – Phil Schuman
- Collins Design and Build – Jade Collins
- Copper Country Walleye Association – Ross Rinkinen
- Great Lake Angler eMagazine – Capt. Mike Schoonveld
- Trout Scout Charters- Alpena – Capt. Ed Retherford
- Fairport Sport Fishing Association – Dylan Holzenkamp
- Sportsman Fishing Charters Pentwater – Capt. Brent Daggett
- Reel Legacy Sport Fishing Charters, Ludington – Capt. Scott Van Hoven
- Silver Addiction Charters, Inc – Capt. Mark Williams
- Charlie’s Marina Pentwater – Charlie Lamb
- Blue Moon Bistro – Jason Munford
- El-Lin Charters – Capt. Dave Even
- Family Barbershop, Ludington – Brad and Wendy Patterson
- Linke’s Body Shop, Manistee – Michael Linke
- Johnson Supreme Marine – Todd Johnson
- Majestic Taxidermy – Travis Walle
- Lost Arrow Ranch – Jeff Poosch
- Home Waters Real Estate – Sean MacDonald
- Artesian Acers Winery – Kevin Hughes
- Sandpiper Sportfishing Charters – Capt. Kevin Hughes
- Fishing Affair Charters – Captain Ryan Bullard
- Peddlers Patch – Raymi McKenna
- Borema Hamm Insurance – Tony Hamm
- Riverside Charters – Capt. Paul Schlafley
- Chopo’s Northside Bar – Josh Sagala
- Free & Clear Financial Solutions, LLC – Mark Williams
- Glas & Associates – Adam Harvey
- Century 21 Bayshore Real Estate - Brian Mulherin
- Black Pearl Sportfishing – Capt. Mark Rapson

- Keweenaw Charter Fishing Co. – Capt. Travis White
- Ed Beckley – Actively Communicating with Legislators and others on this bill
- OFishlBusiness Recreational Fishing Team – Ed Jonaitis
- Yooper Outdoors 906 – Capt. John Rahn
- Chromeseekers Sportfishing – Capt. Dan Stewart
- Therapy Two Charters – Capt. Jim Carr
- Thumbs Up Charters – Capt. Karl Burnside
- Stray Cat Charters – Capt. John Giszczak
- Chum Bucket Charters – Capt. Steve Hubert
- Hook & Heuver Guide Service, LLC – Capt. Jim LaBeske
- Reelin Leeland Charters – Capt. Tony Radjenovich
- Tangled Tackle – Nathen and Jesse Miller
- Lure Lipstick, LLC – Michael Dickerson
- Sault Ste. Marie Convention and Visitors Bureau – Linda Hoath
- Great Lake Bay Region Chapter of MSSFA – Mark Trudell
- Best Chance Charters – Capt. Dave Engle
- Beaver’s Lures – Katelyn Beaver
- TCH Gear – Gary Jerchovic
- Saginaw Bay Walleye Club & Michigan Walleye Tour – Keith Dewald
- Teaching Fishing – Lance Valentine
- The Straits Area Sportsman Club – Gary V. Gorniak
- Lake Huron Citizens Fisheries Advisory Committee – Frank Krist
- Upper Black River Council – Paul Rose
- Fishing 411 – Mark Romanack
- All Species Conservation Club – Greg Peck
- Manistee Area Chamber of Commerce – Carmen Kott
- Ludington Area Convention & Visitors Bureau- Brandy Miller

4. The hatchery stamp will improve opportunities for inland anglers with increased walleye production, adding millions more walleyes for inland stocking, 25,000 more muskies and increasing the number of inland

trout stocking sites. It will also support sturgeon and grayling recovery programs.

5. With the increased funding from our proposal, the DNR will be able to expand inland lake and river surveys to better understand fish populations and how to manage them. Most of our inland lakes, like Houghton Lake, have not been surveyed in many years. This information is critical for stocking plans, habitat improvements and regulation changes like slot limits to increase natural reproduction of fish to improve inland lake and river fisheries.

6. Michigan's outstanding fisheries relies on research and stocking programs by the DNR to sustain them. Fish stocking is critical to maintain salmon and trout fisheries in the Great Lakes. Ongoing research and data collection such as creel counts, charter reporting, fish population studies and forage surveys are required to properly manage and sustain inland and Great Lakes fisheries. This legislation proposed by stakeholders will prevent future program cuts and prevent degradation of hatcheries and facilities. It will rectify the budget deficits facing the DNR Fisheries Division.

6. The bill establishes a \$5 youth fishing license. Youth will be able to catch and release fish without this license. It would only be required for youth to keep up to a limit of fish on the Great Lakes and to keep fish in inland waters after age 12 (youth can keep fish in inland waters without this license up to age 12.) The age requirement to need a regular fishing licenses will be set to 16. With this change, The Fisheries Division will get an additional \$10 per youth license sold from the Federal Government Dingell-Johnson act.

7. Senior licenses would increase by \$2 starting in 2027.

8. The bill provides for license fees to increase by no more than the rate of inflation or no more than 2% annually pending approval from a stakeholder fishery oversight committee. The Fisheries Oversight Committee —comprised of representatives from across the state, including charter boat captains, inland lake and river fishing guides, recreational anglers, and citizen members—will ensure broad and ongoing stakeholder engagement in how Fisheries Division funding is managed. The FOC is formally tasked with reviewing annual revenue and expenditure reports, evaluating proposed budgets and work plans, and making recommendations to the Fisheries Division and Legislature. This structure ensures that future financial decisions reflect the diverse needs of Michigan's angling community and are made transparently, responsibly, and free from undue political pressure. Any future fee increases will need an approval recommendation from the Fisheries Oversight Committee to ensure trust and transparency that fee increases are justified. This guarantees the DNR Fisheries Division can fulfill its mission to manage and enhance Michigan's fishing resources for decades to come and not face another budget crisis and programs cuts which are occurring today.

9. Continue reintroduction efforts of arctic grayling and sturgeon restoration.

10. This bill will fund increased cormorant control which have proven to improve fisheries. Managing cormorant populations is supported by and improves fishing for both inland and Great Lakes anglers. It will reduce Cormorant predation on fish by over 500,000 pounds per year.

Ancillary Benefits

Sport fishing in Michigan generates over **3.9 billion** in economic activity. Robust fisheries support thousands of small businesses in Michigan. They draw anglers from all over the state and Midwest to spend money at hotels and motels, tackle shops, marinas, gas stations, charter boats and guide services and fishing lodges. Strong recreational fisheries are critical for business survival in remote locations in the Upper Peninsula and Northern Michigan. Supporting **House Bill 5093** is good for anglers and good for businesses that cater to anglers.