

MITU Action alert

Title: Scientific Fish Management Needs Your Action Now!

This is a conservation Action Alert of great importance, please take the time to review it and take appropriate action.

The Michigan DNR Natural Resources Commission, with authority to set fisheries regulations, is poised to take action on an increase in brook trout bag limits at their next meeting on November 9, 2017. They have proposed increasing the bag limit for brook trout from 5 to 10 on 1,100 miles of Upper Peninsula streams, and requested the DNR evaluate up to 2.5 times more miles for inclusion next year.

MITU has communicated with you about this issue in the past. An article describing the full background on it can be found in our Spring 2017 magazine issue

(<https://app.box.com/s/0aryuaziwhf4luilglfpyj49fkzo5h14>) and other supporting information can be found at <http://www.michigantu.org/index.php/michigan-tu-contacts-2/michigan-tu-contacts-4/resource-management>.

We need you to review this topic, and send an email to the NRC with your opinion about it.

To summarize a lot of information on this topic:

- A couple Natural Resource Commissioners from the UP have been pushing for the brook trout bag limit in the UP to be doubled, to 10 fish per day, for many years now. Their premise is that it would increase angling on these waters.
- A DNR statewide survey of angler opinions on UP brook trout found that the vast majority of anglers either prefer the 5 fish bag limit or oppose a 10 fish bag limit.
- The DNR experimentally listed 8 streams in the UP as 10 fish bag limits 5 years ago, and committed to study its effects. The results from their social and biological surveys of it, showed that most anglers did not prefer this, that the experimental streams did not see an increase in overall fishing pressure, increased harvest did result, and the brook trout populations decreased compared to their paired control streams.
- Despite these results, the NRC last year, voted to have the DNR pursue including all Type 1 streams in the UP (the vast majority of them) under a 10 brook trout bag limit.
- Michigan TU attempted to work with the NRC to bring scientific sideboards to this and to minimize the potential negative impacts. Those efforts did not work, and currently, they have proposed listing 1,100 miles of streams as 10 brook trout bag limit per day in 2018, and have urged the DNR to return to them in 2018 with more that could increase the total to 2,750 miles. This is encompassed in a fisheries order up for their action next month on November 9 ([http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/FO_200.18 Trout Salmon Whitefish Lake Herring 602001 7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/FO_200.18_Trout_Salmon_Whitefish_Lake_Herring_602001_7.pdf)).
- The DNR created a list of criteria that should be used to determine if a specific stream should be included, these included things like avoiding streams: that offer critical thermal refuge, provide critical spawning or rearing habitat, that have known coaster brook trout streams and those with experimental coaster brook trout regulations, not listing more than minor portions of a watershed, keeping these to first or second order streams, and avoiding streams opposed for inclusion by the public.

- The DNR has been under constant pressure from certain members of the NRC to find streams to include. The result has been reasonable criteria applied in non-scientific manner. The DNR does not possess the information on any of the streams proposed, to confidently or completely “clear” them through all criteria. They have been pushed into a position of assuming a lack of knowledge about them means they fit these criteria. Other clear examples of this misapplication of criteria include: Paquin Creek (an entire watershed proposed), and W.Br. Huron River and Silver River both proposed despite being known coaster brook trout watersheds under coaster brook trout experimental regulations. TU members should know, that while the criteria sound good and reasonable, the specific streams proposed do not confidently meet them, and in many cases knowingly violate them.
- Why is this happening? In recent years, the authority for fisheries regulations was shifted from the DNR Director to the NRC, at the same time as they were given the legal mandate for scientific fish & wildlife management. Among the NRC are certain commissioners who personally favor this increase in brook trout bag limits. Prominent among them is Commissioner J.R. Richardson who has headlong advocated for this increase and has wielded considerable influence over the DNR and fellow commissioners on this topic thus far. But, all commissioners must now cast their individual votes on this measure, that reflect their duties for scientific fish and wildlife management.
- Since TU’s inception we have subscribed to the proposition *“that what’s good for trout is good for trout fishermen and that managing trout for the trout rather than for the fisherman is fundamental to the solution of our trout problems.”* Michigan TU is opposed to the fisheries order on this issue, up for NRC action on November 9, 2017. We need your help now.

What you can do:

- 1.) Send an email with your comments and opinions about this issue, to the NRC and DNR. This can be as simple as a statement like “I oppose the fisheries order increasing brook trout bag limits in the UP and believe the NRC should not vote to approve it”. Or it can be a much more personalized comment reflecting your personal opinions or concerns about it, either overall or on specific streams proposed for inclusion. But, it’s critically important now that you take the time to send your comment on it. Send these emails to NRC@michigan.gov. This will be distributed to all NRC Commissioners, with copies to the relevant DNR staff.
- 2.) Send this action alert to your friends or family who have a stake in this, but might not have gotten this from us. Urge them to take the time to send their opinion via email to the NRC.
- 3.) Consider giving your in person testimony to the NRC at its meeting on November 9, 2017, in Lansing (meeting agendas, location and time information and rules for testifying can be found at http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-65134_65145---,00.html).

It is Michigan TU’s responsibility to represent our members on issues such as this. Occasionally, it becomes necessary for trout conservationists to represent themselves directly. This is one of those times. Please take action on this important issue and make your own voice heard.