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WORKING TOGETHER TO PROMOTE A QUALITY FISHERY

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3862 N. Ocqueoc Road • Millersburg, MI 49759

December 1, 2009

Natural Resources Commission  
Department of Natural Resources  
Executive Division  
Attention: Teresa Gloden  
P.O. BOX 30028  
Lansing, MI 48909

Honorable Chairperson and Commission Members:

The Hammond Bay Area Anglers Association (HBAAA) supports the approval of Fisheries Order 206.10A as submitted on November 25, 2009, which adjusts the recreational walleye harvest regulation on Mullett Lake and parts of the Cheboygan and Black Rivers by implementing a daily bag limit of 3 walleye and a reduced season from May 15, 2010 to March 15, 2011.

There was much concern expressed when the public learned that because of a low abundance of walleyes in Mullett Lake the recreational walleye harvest might have to be closed for the 2010 fishing season. The HBAAA worked closely with Dr. Kelley Smith to quickly organize a public meeting held in Presque Isle County to discuss the issues. Since the fishery in Mullett Lake is under the jurisdiction of the 2007 Inland Consent Decree the resource is shared with Tribal and State fishers. Nearly 100 persons attended the meeting with representatives present from several Tribes and 13 organizations. Dr. Smith, Nicholas Popoff and Tim Cwalinski of the Fisheries Division patiently explained the status of the fishery and the management requirements under the Inland Consent Decree. In addition, Doug Craven, Natural Resources Director of the Little Traverse Bands of Odawa Indians, assisted in educating the attendants. After 3 hours of discussion, the vast majority of persons leaving the meeting appeared to be comfortable that a solution could be worked out and the recreational walleye regulations could be adjusted so the harvest of walleyes could continue during 2010.

A second public meeting was held in Indian River the following week and again there were nearly 100 people in attendance. Good support was expressed for changes in the walleye regulations if the harvest of walleyes could continue next season in Mullett Lake. Dr. Smith encouraged the formation of an Inland Lake Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee composed of representatives from organizations and interests in the area. I became the new Committee Chairperson and we met on November 23, 2009 with representatives from the Fisheries Division including, Dr.

Smith, Dr. Steve Hewitt and Tim Cwalinski. Options for changing the walleye regulations were discussed and it was unanimously agreed that the changes proposed in the resubmitted Fisheries Order 206.10A would be acceptable. Much of the debate actually focused on the possibility of expanding these regulations to the other large lakes in the region. It was agreed that since time was short the Committee would work with the public for the next several months to determine if there is interest in including other lakes in 2011.

The Hammond Bay Area Anglers Association strongly supports the continuation of the Inland Lake Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee. The three meetings held over the last few weeks illustrated how crucial communications are between stakeholders and the Department. For example, I have represented the Hammond Bay Area Anglers Association on the MDNR's Lake Huron Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee since 1989 when it was established by MDNR Director David Hale. The Committee has provided a very productive forum for the exchange of ideas between stakeholders and the Fisheries Division. The Lake Huron Committee has successfully dealt with such emotional issues as large cuts in fish stocking. The stakeholders are able to bring their constituents concerns and suggestions to the meetings and participate in forming goals and objectives. The stakeholders then return home with much knowledge of the various issues and they are aware that they have contributed to formulating policy. This results in partnerships and strong support from organizations and communities. Ultimately, the natural resources are better protected and utilized which saves time because Department policy can be implemented more smoothly. Citizen Committees are very beneficial and we urge you to continue to support them.

The Hammond Bay Area Anglers Association would like to thank the Fisheries Division for their quick response and willingness to work with all involved and acknowledge the Tribes willingness to compromise and work out a reasonable solution.

Thank you for an opportunity to hear our voice.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Frank Krist".

Frank Krist, Member  
Board of Directors  
Hammond Bay Area Anglers Association  
515 S. First St.  
Rogers City, MI 49779