

INTRODUCTION

The State of Michigan contains 11,000 lakes, 36,000 miles of rivers and streams, and 43 percent of the Laurentian Great Lakes which contain more than 20 percent of the world's fresh water. These waters contain a variety of fish communities representing most of the types found in North America. These extensive resources in proximity to the large human population of Michigan and nearby states provide fishing opportunities which are unmatched anywhere in the world.

Recreational fishing is the largest and highest-valued use of the state's fishery resources. Approximately two million Michigan residents and 334,000 non-resident tourists fish in Michigan each year. These anglers fish over 35 million angler days per year. Net value of fishing to these fishermen has been estimated at \$950 million. In fishing, anglers spend \$850 million per year with a resulting impact on tourism and fishing equipment sectors of Michigan's economy of \$1.4 billion per year. This produces value-added of \$900 million annually with associated employment of 18,000 persons. Since some of these expenditures would have gone toward other uses in Michigan if not spent on fishing, net contribution to Michigan's economy is \$210 million of economic activity, \$140 million value-added annually, and 2,700 jobs. Much of the activity in excess of this net contribution, however, is in different economic sectors and geographical areas than would otherwise occur. Net contribution to tourism- and fishing-related businesses in rural areas and coastal towns is over \$500 million per year and 12,000 jobs. In many northern Michigan communities, fishing and related tourism support as much as half of the local economy.

Commercial fishing in Michigan waters of the Great Lakes produces approximately 16 million pounds of whitefish, chubs, perch, lake trout, catfish, and other species with a dockside value of approximately \$10 million each year. Wholesaling, processing, and retail sales after landing produce another \$9 million in economic activity annually. These activities provide employment for about 1000 Michigan residents. Approximately 40% of the landed value is taken by treaty fishermen; the remainder is landed by state-licensed fishermen.

However, Michigan's fisheries resources are also fragile in many respects and are subject to heavy fishing and many other human impacts; thus they require fairly intensive protection and management. In the absence of management beyond statutory fishing regulations and habitat protection, the state's fisheries would quickly degenerate and would support no more than 40 percent of present fishing. Management of Michigan's fisheries began with establishment of the Michigan Fish Commission in 1873. The Fisheries Division of the Department of Natural Resources which evolved from that commission is now the second oldest administrative agency in the state's government.