



# FLY FISHERS INTERNATIONAL

## GREAT LAKES COUNCIL CONSERVATION COMMITTEE REPORT June 14, 2018

### **Conservation Grants**

No new Conservation Grant applications have been received.

### **AuSable River Fish Hatchery Update**

The AuSable River Fish Hatchery fight experience a significant set back in May when MDEQ issued the permit that would allow the Harrietta fish farm to proceed if certain additional conditions are met. The Anglers of the AuSable issued the following statement.

“Anglers of the Au Sable is disappointed by the decision of the Michigan DEQ to issue a permit allowing a fish farm to pollute the Au Sable River. We are pleased that the DEQ recognizes that the fish farm poses a substantial threat given the increased risk of whirling disease in the river and as such is requiring the fish farm to monitor for that disease which has been disastrous to trout fisheries in other rivers. But we will continue to appeal this permit. We are unhappy that the DEQ continues to ignore the fact that this fish farm will cause harm to the river including the holy waters. The Au Sable River is the economic backbone of Crawford County. To give a permit to allow this fish farm to operate and endanger the fishing economy, the tourism economy and the vacation home economy of the community is simply a bad decision.

Anglers of the Au Sable has already filed suit in Crawford County Circuit Court to stop this facility on other grounds, including the state’s refusal to uphold deed restrictions on the facility and violations of the Michigan Environmental Protection Act. We will continue to pursue those claims and expect to win.”

The GLC and FFI national provided Conservation Grants to the Anglers of the AuSable to fund their fight against the Harrietta Hills Fish Farm.

### **Aquila/Back Forty Mine**

The fight to stop the Aquila/Back Forty mine on the Menominee River had a significant setback when the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality issued a wetland permit for the mine.

The Great Lakes Council had sent comments to the Michigan DEQ strongly opposing the mine and also opposed a proposed land swap between MDNR and Aquila Resources, the mining company with the proposed project on the Menominee. The GLC and FFI national provided grants to support efforts opposing the mine.

### **Nestle Waters Water Withdrawal Proposal**

In another setback, MDEQ issued a permit in April, 2018 that would permit Nestle Waters to increase groundwater withdrawal at the corporation’s White Pine Springs site

in Osceola County. The Nestle proposal would increase groundwater withdrawal over 160%, from 150 gallons per minute to 400 gallons per minute.

The Great Lakes Council is opposed this increase and provided written comments to MDEQ strongly urging that the agency **deny** Nestle Waters request. The long term implications of these water withdrawals on Michigan's aquifers are largely unknown and continuing to increase these withdrawals without more measured study has the potential to irreparably damage our streams and the fisheries they support.

### **Resident Trout Management Plan**

The MDNR Fisheries Division Management Plan for Inland Trout has been finalized and approved. Through our participation on the Coldwater Resources Steering Committee we provided two rounds of comments on this plan. Since the first draft, the DNR has removed almost all of the onerous comments regarding catch and release fishing as recommended by the GLC. Most of our recommendations were incorporated into the plan.

### **Arctic Grayling Restoration**

Jim Schramm represented the GLC Conservation Committee at the October, 2017 meeting of the planning committee devoted to the restoration of the grayling. The GLC joins others representing university fisheries researchers, fishing groups, conservation organizations, etc.

At this point, it looks like the first reintroduction efforts will be in tributaries to the Manistee River. We plan on being involved in this effort for many years to come.

### **Net Pen Aquaculture Bill**

U.S. Representative Kildee has introduced a federal bill that would ban net pen aquaculture in the Great Lakes. The Great Lakes Council and FFI national signed on to a letter from angler groups supporting this legislation. As of this date, no action has been taken on the bill.

### **Michigan Hydro Relicensing Coalition**

Jim Schramm provided an excellent report on our involvement in the MHRC.

### **Conservation Committee Members**

Conservation Committee members include Wayne Anderson, Jen Kablunde, Terry Lyons, Belinda Friis, Brad Reynolds, John Bebow, Roger Fechner, Jim Schramm, Dennis O'Brien and Dave Peterson. The Committee is always seeking additional members. Please contact Dave Peterson at [dpeterson3@charter.net](mailto:dpeterson3@charter.net) if you are interested or know of any GLC members who might be interested in participating.

Respectfully submitted,

Dave Peterson  
Great Lakes Council VP for Conservation