

# Indiana Agency Update

## ***Lapsed Angler Recruitment***

Indiana is one of several states that will be participating in a direct mail marketing effort to increase fishing license sales. The direct mail toolkit developed by RBFF (Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation) will be used. Indiana has had a point of sale system for only three years but we are beginning to make good use of it. Last year in a pilot study of lapsed anglers, we mined the POS for some information and did a small trial of 20,00 lapsed anglers. The study was highly informative and showed promise for the broader effort we are now launching with RBFF.

## ***Paddlefish Operation***

A two-year undercover investigation on Indiana's portion of the Ohio River revealed widespread violations of existing commercial fishing laws. The case was labeled "Operation Skid Roe" and focused on paddlefish and the caviar trade. More than 20 suspects were arrested with the filing of over 300 charges (some felonies) including money laundering, drug charges and even illegal possession of a moonshine still. Commercial paddlefish harvest is legal in the Indiana, Illinois and Kentucky portion of the Ohio River. However, the lucrative caviar market led to fishing in closed areas and marketing of sport-snagged paddlefish among other violations. The case prompted enactment of emergency rules in Indiana for increased paddlefish protection including a season, size limit, a ban on sport snagging and a seasonal ban on gill and trammel nets. The three states are working together to establish uniform permanent rules that will provide adequate resource protection.

## ***Shovelnose Sturgeon Die-Off***

From mid-June to late July, an estimated 200 shovelnose sturgeon died throughout a 50 mile stretch of the Wabash River in west central Indiana. Samples submitted to Purdue's Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory for analysis yielded no obvious cause of mortality. It was learned that the Iowa DNR has observed several similar die-offs in the Des Moines River since 1990. A large sturgeon die-off in 2006 reportedly numbered in the thousands. The Iowa kills occurred during similar low flow conditions as the Wabash kill, affected only shovelnose sturgeon as in the Wabash die-off, and have generally occurred in the same part of the Des Moines River at about the same time of year. Indiana will continue to watch closely for any repeat of this mysterious die-off in an effort to learn more about the cause.

## ***Senior Fishing License for Residents***

Beginning in 2008 Indiana residents over the age 64 and older and born after March 31, 1943 will be required to purchase either an annual senior license (\$3) or a Fish-for-Life senior fishing license (\$17). Indiana residents born before April 1, 1943 (65 and older) will continue to be exempt from having to buy a fishing license. Non-residents, 17 years old or older, must possess one of three existing licenses for non-resident anglers. This new funding source will capture license revenue as demographics change for baby-boomers and increase Indiana's federal aid funding potential in the future.

## Indiana's State Fair Fishing Pond

### Need:

National statistics show that the time children spend outdoors is shrinking. Children have fewer opportunities to try out fishing due to activities competing for time, less access to fishing locations, and a lack of knowledge about fishing or a mentor to assist them in learning to fish. This is resulting in a decline in the number of fishing license sales and less funding for fisheries management.

### Objectives:

The goal of this project is to provide children and their families with a chance to try out fishing as they visit the Indiana State Fair. The families are introduced to fishing in an environment with a high chance of successfully catching a fish and with helpful instruction available. A secondary goal of the program was to provide outdoor organizations in Indiana an opportunity to work together with the Indiana Division of Fish & Wildlife to provide an opportunity to pass on their love for our natural resources and their fishing expertise.

### Procedures:

Sport Fish Restoration money and contributions from the Division of Fish & Wildlife and the Indiana State Fair were used to construct a 1/4 acre concrete and limestone fishing pond behind the Department of Natural Resource building at the State Fair. At the same time funds were used to upgrade and redesign the viewing ponds and educational



displays around the outside of the building. The renovation gave an attractive new look to the whole DNR area, including a new amphitheater for outdoor presentations.

Children and their families signed up for a fishing time and received a wrist band with their time slot marked on it. At the appropriate time

the families would gather under a tent next to the pond for some short instructions on how to fish, the procedures for the fishing pond, safety and some fish biology. After their instruction session the families moved to their designated fishing station around the edge of the pond. Waiting for them at that location was an equipped cane pole and a volunteer to assist with fishing. After their time fishing, the families would move on around the pond to a tent where packets of information and educational activities were available.

Volunteers were recruited from several outdoor organizations and their group was recognized on a large sign board next to the pond. All fishing was catch and release. The pond was stocked with bluegill and catfish. Between fishing times the pond was used for

a variety of programs including water dog demonstrations, fly fishing demonstrations, water safety talks, and remote control boats.

#### Results:

During the 12 day run of the fair 400 volunteers helped 6500 children to fish. Including family members, an estimated 18,000 people participated in the fishing pond activities. Several thousand casual observers witnessed these families having a fun fishing experience. Families spent a significantly longer time at the DNR building because of the pond and several families bought fishing equipment from the DNR store.



#### Benefits:

Most of the children who fished at the State Fair pond were fishing for the first time. By having a fun, positive experience, shared by family members, they are likely to try fishing again when the opportunity arises. We heard nothing but positive comments from the volunteers and families involved with the event. One of the benefits was bringing together members from such diverse groups of outdoor organizations to establish long term relationships and partnerships which will benefit natural resources. The Department of Natural Resources and the fishing experience at fair received a great deal of positive publicity. The governor, DNR Director and several other dignitaries were on hand for the “first cast” into the pond which improved their awareness and visibility of our programs. The fishing pond became an attractive gathering place for all types of groups attending the fair. The biggest benefit however, was the excited squeals and laughter from the kids when landing their first fish.

The fishing pond has proven to provide some unexpected benefits. Sponsorships have developed as a result of this project, helping to make the cost of operating the pond more manageable. After the fair the fish were taken to a state prison where the inmates learned to clean them as part of a career development program. We have since established a partnership with the State Prison and their food preparation program to clean other wild game. All the meat generated from this program is donated to a local food pantry.

#### Evaluation:

We tracked numbers of volunteers and participants throughout the event but the main evaluation was the informal discussions held with volunteers and participants.

## **HYDRILLA INVADES THE MIDWEST Indiana implements aggressive eradication plan**

During a routine plant survey in August 2006, Indiana DNR fisheries biologists discovered a plant that appeared to be hydrilla in Lake Manitou, a 735-acre natural lake in northern Indiana near the town of Rochester. The plant was confirmed as hydrilla by Dr. Robin Scribailo from Purdue North-Central.

The Lake Manitou hydrilla population is far removed from other known populations. The nearest confirmed populations are in Pennsylvania and Tennessee. There are no other reported hydrilla populations in the Midwest.

Following the initial discovery and confirmation as hydrilla, more intensive plant sampling took place to determine the extent of the infestation. Scattered hydrilla plants have been found in the shallow waters of the northern half of the lake. There are a few areas where the hydrilla is very dense, almost to the point of monoculture. The wide distribution of the plants indicates that this species has probably been established in Lake Manitou for a few years.

### **Hydrilla containment**

Actions in 2006 focused on containment of hydrilla in Lake Manitou and early detection efforts at other waters. Contact herbicide was applied to 20 acres of the densest hydrilla beds. This strategy was aimed at preventing further tuber or turion production and to reduce the amount of fragmentation spread in the lake.

A quarantine was quickly established on Lake Manitou to prevent the spread of hydrilla to other waters. All access ramps, public and private, have been cabled and locked. The only boats or other watercraft allowed on the lake are those with owned or rented pier space on Manitou. The Lake Manitou Association will facilitate the launching of watercraft by residents in the spring and their removal in the fall. All watercraft, lifts, piers, and other equipment being removed will be thoroughly inspected and all plant material and sediment removed.

### **Eradication is the goal**

Hydrilla eradication began in the spring of 2007. SePRO Corporation is the contractor for the eradication project. A whole-lake fluridone (Trade name: Sonar) application is the strategy being employed in 2007. A low dose of fluridone can be extremely effective to eliminate hydrilla. Due to the extended hydrilla tuber germination period, the maintenance of a lethal dose of fluridone may be necessary for nearly the entire growing season. The goal is to eliminate hydrilla vegetative material to prevent any additional tuber formation.

Surveys are vital in determining how the eradication is progressing. Sampling of the tuber population was initiated in the spring of 2007 to document pre-eradication tuber densities. Tuber sampling will be conducted regularly to monitor the decline of the tuber bank. Vegetation surveys will also be conducted to closely monitor the effects of Sonar on the hydrilla.

Whole-lake Sonar treatments are expected to take place for three consecutive years at Lake Manitou which is the length of time experts studying monoecious hydrilla say that tubers can typically remain dormant. Beyond that, additional monitoring will be required and targeted treatment may be necessary to achieve the goal of complete elimination.

A project of this magnitude is expected to cost \$500,000 in 2007. Complete eradication may take between 4 and 6 years with a total price tag that could easily exceed \$2 million.