

RESOLUTION SUPPORTING SAGINAW BAY RECREATIONAL FISHING AND AN UPDATE OF MICHIGAN'S COMMERCIAL FISHING REGULATIONS

SUPPORTING: HOUSE BILLS 4567 (Rep. Lilly, R-Park Township), 4568 (Rep. O'Malley, R-Lake Ann) and 4569 (Rep. Wendzel, R-Watervliet) of 2019

SUMMARY

Three bills are currently being reviewed by the Michigan House of Representatives' Committee on Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation. The City of Bay City Commission should enthusiastically support their passage to protect our world class recreational fishery in Saginaw Bay. These bills update and codify language, particularly regarding the commercial fishing industry that has been in place since 1929. These bills will:

- Better define terminology
- Remove obsolete language
- Improve and modernize reporting requirements, fines, fees and penalties
- Add a restitution component for violations and poaching
- Clarify authority
- Codify existing practices that have been developed through administrative rules and orders
- Update the commercial fishing fee structure
- Improve the ability to enforce law
- Align Michigan's statutes with the other Great Lakes states
- Codify fish species that are available for commercial and/or recreational harvest
- Establish an improved state model that can be used as background for upcoming negotiations with five tribes who are party to an existing, but soon to be rewritten, consent decree

The bills have the support of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, the Michigan United Conservation Clubs, Trout Unlimited, the Michigan Charter Boat Association, the Saginaw Bay Walleye Club, and dozens of additional groups representing thousands of sportsmen and sportswomen across the state and country.

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WHEREAS, the Saginaw Bay recreational fishery is one of our greatest local and national resource treasures; and

WHEREAS, recreational fishing across Michigan is responsible for over \$2 billion in direct economic expenditures, and directly supports more than 35,000 jobs; and

WHEREAS, Michigan hosts more than 1.4 million recreational anglers annually, including 300,000 from out-of-state, which is the second only to Florida; and

WHEREAS, estimates conclude that recreational fishing in Saginaw Bay alone has a \$33 million yearly direct economic impact to our region; and

WHEREAS, Michigan's recreational anglers contribute more than \$30 million to help manage fisheries resources through taxes on equipment, licenses, and excise fees each year; and

WHEREAS, recreational fishing is a critical piece of our city's and our region's economy; and

WHEREAS, thousands of recreational fishermen come to our area from across the state and country to fish on the Saginaw Bay, Saginaw River and throughout the Saginaw Bay watershed 12 months per year; and

WHEREAS, these fisherman use local hotels, restaurants, retail establishments, marinas, gas stations and other facilities that are important to our economy; and

WHEREAS, the City of Bay City has spent, and continues to spend, resources for public launches, shore fishing locations and opportunities, and recreational fishing boat dockage; and

WHEREAS, the Saginaw Bay fishery – particularly that of perch and walleye - represents more than 75% of Lake Huron's total recreational fishing participation according to Michigan Seagrant; and

WHEREAS, yellow perch, a key and historically important recreation species, are at historically low levels in Saginaw Bay; and

WHEREAS, Saginaw Bay's walleye population is one of our state's and country's greatest restoration success stories. However, it is still not fully recovered at historical levels and is not providing "surplus" walleye that would indicate that a commercial fishery for them is viable or necessary; and

WHEREAS, the Saginaw Bay smallmouth bass fishery has been recently ranked the 8th best in the northeast United States by Bassmaster Magazine, the most widely read bass fishing periodical in the world; and

WHEREAS, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources is supporting new legislation that would update commercial fishing regulations that would better protect and support our critical recreational fishery; and

WHEREAS, commercial fishing regulations have not been substantially updated since 1971, and fines and penalties have not been updated since 1929; and

WHEREAS, these legislative bills have been identified as a high priority by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources for the future management of the Saginaw Bay fishery and the department is enthusiastically supporting their passage; and

WHEREAS, these bills are supported by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, the Michigan United Conservation Clubs, the Saginaw Bay Walleye Club, Trout Unlimited, Hammond Bay Area Anglers Association, Michigan Steelhead & Salmon Fisherman's Association and dozens of local, regional and national organizations that support and want to protect gamefish and recreational angling opportunities; and

WHEREAS, the passage of these bills will allow the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to better manage the fishery and allow them to have a firm foundation while negotiating with tribal interests concerning future fish species that are allowable catch in future consent decrees; and

WHEREAS, there are concurrent bills being reviewed in the Michigan House of Representatives and Michigan Senate that would expand commercial fishing to include important recreational gamefish species such as walleye, yellow perch, smallmouth bass, and other important recreational species and work contrary to our interests in protecting the Saginaw Bay fishery;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT: RESOLVED, that the City of Bay City Commission supports House Bills 4567, 4568, and 4569 which seek to ensure that commercial license fees appropriately cover the program's administration and oversight, protect the sportsfishing legacy of our state and region by establishing penalties for the taking of non-commercial species, codify certain species that are allowed and not allowed for commercial take, and update the authority of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to effectively maintain and monitor the Saginaw Bay fishery both recreationally and commercially.

Copies of approved resolution to be sent to:

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Michigan State Representative Jim Lilly
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Michigan United Conservation Clubs
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