



February 3, 2023

Mr. Scott Heintzelman  
Supervisor, Central Lake Michigan Management Unit  
Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Fisheries Division  
8015 Mackinaw Trail  
Cadillac MI 49601

Dear Mr. Heintzelman,

The Board of the Platte Lake Improvement Association is formally requesting the resumption of walleye planting in Big Platte Lake. The foundation for this request is two-fold. First, is the recent communication we have had with Dr. Kevin Wehrly and his co-authors of the DNR's Walleye Management Plan for Inland Waters who have concluded that Platte Lake is a borderline 2-3 Class lake. This should place us near the top of their priority list for planting walleye. Second, 33 years of MDNR data shows no evidence that walleye planting in Big Platte Lake will have a negative impact on the Platte River State Fish Hatchery Coho Salmon Program.

As you may be aware, BPL was a regular recipient of walleye planting by the MDNR until planting ended in 2013 without explanation. Big Platte Lake has been listed as "a Class 2 lake" in MDNR's Walleye Management Plan for Inland Waters. The Platte Lake Improvement Association has over 30 years of detailed data on Big Platte Lake. We recently shared our measured temperature data, collected every two weeks by Benzie Conservation District, with Dr. Kevin Wehrly (DNR) to determine if Big Platte Lake could be reclassified as a Class 3 lake. His attached summary concludes that BPL is correctly classified as a Class 2 lake, but borders on being a Class 3 lake. We believe that this conclusion aligns well with the MDNR priorities for its walleye planting program. Our observations have suggested that there is likely some small degree of natural reproduction of walleye occurring in Big Platte Lake, but not enough to effectively sustain the walleye population without additional annual plantings.

The Platte Lake Improvement Association has had ongoing dialogue with the leadership of the Platte River State Fish Hatchery about this issue. We are sensitive to MDNR concerns that increasing the walleye population in Platte Lake will result in an increase in the predation of the Coho salmon smolt and have a negative impact on Coho returns to the hatchery. To help address and quantify this concern, a statistical analysis was conducted (attached) using MDNR data. We measured the correlation between walleye planting, Coho smolt release at the hatchery and adult Coho return in the fall. That analysis demonstrated no statistically significant correlation between adult walleye numbers from planting in BPL and actual adult Coho returns. In fact, the correlation was slightly positive. While we would expect some predation to occur, there is no data that supports that walleye numbers in BPL have any significant impact on Coho returns.

Because of this new evidence, PLIA believes that a sustainable walleye fishery could be established in Big Platte Lake with the planting of about 60,000 fingerlings annually for the next 3 years followed by 60,000 fingerling every 3 years beyond that. This strategy would be consistent with the previous MDNR walleye management program for Big Platte Lake before planting was discontinued.

Our members are constantly inquiring about when can we expect walleye planting to resume in Big Platte Lake. We would welcome an opportunity to discuss this data with you.

Sincerely,

William Anderson  
President,  
Platte Lake Improvement Association, PO Box 272, Honor, Michigan 49640