



GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
LANSING



SHANNON LOTT
ACTING DIRECTOR

February 17, 2023

William Anderson, President
Platte Lake Improvement Association
P.O. Box 272
Honor, MI 49640

Dear Mr. Anderson:

Thank you for sharing the Platte Lake Improvement Association's (PLIA) request for walleye stocking in Big Platte Lake. I am aware of the on-going dialog between Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) Fisheries Division and the PLIA. I can assure you that we continue to look for ways to improve walleye angling opportunities in Big Platte Lake without jeopardizing Coho and Steelhead smolts released in the watershed.

There are several factors that remain a hinderance to reestablishing walleye stocking in Big Platte Lake:

First, although I recognize the PLIA analysis of MDNR Coho return statistics and correlation, it has been well established that walleye predation on trout and salmon smolts does occur and can have significant impacts. Coho will soon be part of a mass marking project that will tag and clip all stocked fish. This will aid in evaluating predation in Big Platte Lake and help identify where Coho are having the highest rate of survival.

Second, MDNR has conducted several fall walleye evaluations to detect the occurrence of natural reproduction with mostly poor results. In addition to, and to further understand the size of the walleye population in Big Platte Lake, MDNR would like to conduct a population estimate survey soon. To efficiently conduct this type of survey, our local fisheries unit will need the assistance of other fisheries units. We are actively working to schedule this.

Third, walleye rearing efforts in the Central Lake Michigan Management Unit are at capacity. To resume a stocking program on Big Platte Lake, other priority stockings would have to be cut or reduced within the unit, or we would seek surplus walleye from other units to meet requests. This is possible, however can be inconsistent.

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Last, I do agree with Dr. Wehrly' s classification of Big Platte Lake. I think we all agree that the lake can support walleye and does have natural reproduction during some years. However, the competing management objectives, and the protection of the State's only Coho salmon broodstock continues a higher priority at this time, but I would like to determine a way to have both.

Again, thank you for the discussion as we keep the lines of communication open. If you have questions, or need further information, you may contact me at 231.433.9782 or by email heintzelmans@michigan.gov.

Sincerely,

Scott Heintzelman
Unit Manager, CLMMU
Fisheries Division