

INTRODUCTION

In the early spring of 1966 coho salmon, Oncorhynchus kisutch, will be released by the Michigan Department of Conservation in an effort to establish this species in the Great Lakes. Additional releases of coho (also known as silver salmon) are scheduled for 1967 and 1968; thus three age-groups will be present and the full duration of the species' life cycle will be covered. The coho eggs were provided by the Oregon Fish Commission for the 1966 plants. The Washington Department of Fisheries and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game have joined with Oregon in furnishing coho eggs to Michigan for the 1967 releases. It will be necessary to obtain additional eggs from these states for plants in 1968 to complete the first phase of the coho salmon introduction.

Several years will be required to assess the outcome of the coho salmon introduction. Whether or not the coho succeeds, attempts will very likely be made to introduce certain other sport fishes in future years.

The coho is aimed at a specific fisheries management problem--namely to elevate the fisheries resource of the Great Lakes to its maximum potential for recreational fishing. The challenge in adapting the coho to the fresh-water environment of the Great Lakes is an intriguing one. Nowhere in the world has the species been permanently established outside its native range in the north Pacific coastal area. Management objectives are even more challenging. The ultimate aim is to convert an estimated annual production of 200 million pounds of low value fishes--mainly alewives--that now teem in the upper Great Lakes into an abundance of sport fishes for the recreational fishermen. Secondly, we hope to restore the depressed commercial fisheries to a productive and economically viable industry.

To accomplish these objectives, intensive management of high value fish species like the lake trout and steelhead and new species like the coho salmon is required. These species are capable of utilizing the superabundant "trash" fish as forage to produce sport or food fish of maximum interest and value.

If the coho salmon introduction succeeds, significant progress in management will have been attained. The total job, however, in "farming" the Great Lakes (the largest bodies of fresh water in the world) will involve a continuing search for additional qualified fish species, and unprecedented efforts to bring the combined group of high value sport and food fish to a level of maximum abundance.

THE MANAGEMENT SITUATION

To define the role of the coho salmon in the Great Lakes, a brief