

Charter Boat Catch and Effort from the Michigan Waters of the Great Lakes, 1994

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Abstract.—Legislation enacted in 1992 by the State of Michigan requires all charter boat operators to report sportfishing catch and effort to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. The objective of the catch and activity reporting system is to obtain a continuous annual record of the number, type, and location of fish harvested by charter boat clients in Michigan.

Ninety-seven percent of the 527 charter fishing operators complied with the law by returning their completed catch reporting forms in 1994. These operators reported making 14,713 charter fishing excursions during April through October. The total number of charter excursions decreased by 805 (-5%) in 1994 compared to 1993. Approximately 400,000 angler hours were spent fishing by some 65,600 charter clients. The distribution of charter fishing excursions was: 69% Lake Michigan, 15% Lake Huron, 11% Lake Erie, 3% Lake Superior, and 2% Lake St. Clair. Over 209,000 fish were reported harvested. The harvest was composed of about 91,000 yellow perch, 37,000 lake trout, 36,000 walleye, 15,000 rainbow trout, 15,000 chinook salmon, 7,900 coho salmon, and 4,000 brown trout.

Michigan's charter boat industry increased from 250 operations in 1979 to nearly 900 in 1989. Since the late 1980s, the number of charter boats used for sport fishing excursions on Michigan's Great Lakes waters has declined to 527. The charter fishing industry provides the State of Michigan each year with significant economic benefits. For example, 239,000 clients spent an estimated \$21 million in addition to charter fees in 1985, and the total statewide investment by charter boat firms in the same year was estimated to exceed \$30 million (Mahoney et al. 1986).

The Michigan Legislature in 1992 passed Act 115, Public Acts of 1992. This legislation re-authorized and strengthened the law, first enacted during 1989 (Act 22, Public Acts of 1989), which required the reporting of sport catch and effort by the charter fishing industry. The legislation was supported by both Michigan Charter Boat Association (MCBA), an industry representative, and Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR). Among other provisions, the law provides more stringent penalties for charter fishing operators who are delinquent by more than 60 days with their