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REPORT NO. 791

GAME DIVISION

Misc

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE CREEL CENSUS ON LAKE ST. CLAIR,

THE ST. CLAIR AND DETROIT RIVERS

by

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In an effort to obtain more definite information on which to base future management plans for Lake St. Clair, the St. Clair and Detroit Rivers, it is first necessary to determine the fishing pressure and nature of the catch by conducting a creel census on these waters. It was decided that all boat liveries along the connecting waters on the American side would be contacted in an attempt to get their cooperation in recording certain data pertaining to all fishermen using their boats. This information, augmented by the creel census taken by the conservation officers in the course of their regular duties, and the conservation officers and members of the Institute staff on certain regular dates, should provide better information as to present fishing conditions in Lake St. Clair and connecting streams.

Arrangements were made by Mr. Westerman, Dr. Hazzard and Mr. Tucker to have the conservation officers in the various districts take the writer around to all of the boat liveries and assist in making the contacts. It was further agreed that the officers were to pick up the completed creel census blanks at the boat liveries at intervals throughout the summer.

The writer wishes to express his thanks for the kindness, courtesy and cooperation extended to him by the following members of the Field Administration Division: Mr. E. E. Tucker, Supervisor of District 17, and the following officers--Messrs. Henry Fredmore, Jack Bowman, Earl Goff, Fred Eckhout, and Isaac Peabody.

On May 20, 21, and 22 the writer and the conservation officers contacted every boat livery along the St. Clair River, Lake St. Clair and the Detroit River. The writer and the officer explained to each livery operator the purpose of the creel census and asked them if they would cooperate with the Department by taking creel census. If the operator agreed to do so, he was given a supply of blank creel census cards, an instruction sheet and full instructions for filling in the blanks. We tried to ask a few questions of each livery operator pertaining to the fishing, but due to a lack of time we soon had to give this up. Each liveryman was told to write on the reverse side of the blank any ideas or suggestions he had on what could or should be done to improve fishing. The list of all of the liverymen contacted is presented in the list at the end of the report.

A total of 84 boat liveries were visited during this three-day period.

A summary of the results is given in Table I. Altogether 16 liveries were

Table I
Data pertaining to the boat liveries contacted
on May 20-22, 1942, along Lake St. Clair,
the St. Clair and Detroit Rivers.

Conservation officer cooperating	Number of boat liveries	Liveries not open or not contacted	Livery not too willing to cooperate	Liveries refusing to cooperate	Total number of liveries cooperating	Total number of boats
Henry Fredmore	9	2	7	157
Jack Bowman	36	5	1	...	31	601
Earl Goff	27	6	1	1	20	347
Fred Eckhout	5	2	3	103
Isaac Peabody	7	1	...	1	5	75
Total	84	16	5	2	66	1,283

not occupied or had failed to open yet this year. The officers said that they would attempt to contact each of these soon, and information as to the name, address and number of boats at each livery would be sent to Ann Arbor. Some operators were not too willing to cooperate, but said that if they had time they would fill in the blanks. Each liveryman was told that if at any time he was unable to fill out the blank completely, he should attempt to put down the number of fishermen renting boats each day.

Between 80 and 90 per cent of the boat livery operators have other work aside from renting boats. Many have small stores, liquor establishments, fish markets, gas stations, etc., in connection with the boat livery. Many operators also sell bait and rent outboard motors. Space has been rented at various boat liveries by private boat owners for storage, painting, overhaul, etc. Besides all of this outside work each operator must see that his own boats are in perfect order, and are always cleaning, repairing, or painting their own boats. They also have to check each boat before it goes out to make certain that life preservers and lights are present. This all indicates that boat liverymen have a great deal of work to do and will partially explain the poor cooperation that will be received from some. On busy days some operators may not have time to fill in all blanks completely.

The best pickerel (walleye) fishing is at night. Obviously many operators will not stay up to contact returning fishermen.

Most boat livery operators complained about the poor business this year. Many liverymen stated that they had taken in between 100 and 1,000 dollars less this year as compared with the same period a year ago. Some of the reasons for the poor business are enumerated below:

1. It is necessary for at least one occupant of each boat to have a Coast Guard Identification Card. Some fishermen have experienced some difficulty in obtaining cards while others hesitate to take the trouble to obtain one. The Coast Guard also restricts fishing areas to a certain extent.

2. Rubber shortage.

3. Threatened gasoline rationing has the operators worried.

4. Defense workers work long hours and six and seven day weeks. Many do not have time to fish.

5. A great many people have been drafted into the army.

6. Shortage of help means that many liveries are short-handed and must necessarily dispense with some of the service that was formerly given.

Because of the uncertain nature of the boat livery business, many operators are selling part or all of their boats.

Most boat livery operators asked many questions of the officer and the writer. The following questions were most frequently asked:

1. What about pollution? They wanted to know what the state was doing about the material that is dumped into the St. Clair and Detroit Rivers, especially by plants working on defense contracts.

2. The Canadians should not be allowed to fish commercially with nets. Some also thought that netting should be stopped in Lakes Erie and Huron because the fish that they catch either hatched or came from the St. Clair or Detroit Rivers, or Lake St. Clair. Some thought that the fish migrate from Lake Erie to Huron or vice versa.

3. Why doesn't the Conservation Department plant more fish in the connecting waters?

4. The carp seiner (Stanley Lupinski) should not be allowed to seine in Lake St. Clair, at least during the spawning season for bass, walleyed pike, etc. Probably 70 per cent of the operators on Lake St. Clair, and many on the St. Clair and Detroit Rivers complained about the "carp seiner".

5. Many operators on the St. Clair River and Lake St. Clair asked numerous questions about the large concentration of smelt present in the St. Clair River all last summer. The people were afraid that the smelt were eating too many small game fish.

Many boat liverymen stated that fishing had been very good so far this year. Several said that fishing started to improve last fall, and had been better than for a number of years. Other important statements made by boat operators are as follows:

1. Several men stated that all fishing should be stopped for a period of two years.

2. Several operators declared that the decrease in fishing coincided with the increase in the number of fishermen. This has taken place during the past seven to ten years.

3. The perch is one of the most important fish in the connecting waters. The average size of the perch has been on the decrease for the past few years, yet large numbers of small perch are present. People now find it more difficult to obtain a "mess" of large perch. It would probably be advisable to obtain a large series of perch scales to check age and growth.

4. Fishermen are apparently catching more bluegills, sunfish and rock bass in certain parts of the connecting waters than in previous years.

There are a few remarks that should be made about the creel census that the Institute is taking with the cooperation of the conservation officers.

1. Fishermen are contacted that have been fishing for varying lengths of time; however, none of them will have finished their day's fishing.

2. There are many types of fishing and for purposes of evaluating the returns, it might be well to separate the fishing into three main groups as follows: a. Muskallonge fishing; b. Other trolling, chugging and casting; and c. Still fishing. Musky fishermen may fish steadily for several days or a week without catching a fish. The data that are obtained from these fishermen should therefore be considered separate. Still-fishing in bayous, at the mouths of rivers and in the numerous canals is probably more productive than all other types of fishing and should therefore be considered separately. Trolling, chugging and casting should also be considered apart from other types of fishing.

List of Boat Liveries in Each Conservation Officer's District

Henry Fredsore

1. Smith Boat Livery. State Park, Port Huron. Closed. Will not open because too close to Coast Guard. No boats in water.
2. ----- Boat Livery. Next to Blue Water Bridge. Not open--has defense job. Boats not in water.
3. Jess Hall--Hall's Boat Livery. 4,018 Military Road, Port Huron.
20 boats. Has defense job also. Been in business 9 years. Said that fishing last year was much better than in any previous year. Trolling 100 per cent better.

4. John T. Cunningham Boat Livery. Rt. 2, Port Huron. 9 boats. Runs commercial fish store. Said that commercial (net) fishing should be stopped on all lakes. State has no right to tell a man when he can fish or how many fish he can take.
5. James Hartman Boat Livery. 1131 River Road, Marysville. 25 boats. (Has outside job also). Been in business 25 years. Fishing top 7-8 years ago, and has been going down since. More fishermen now than 5 and 6 years ago and this probably accounts for decline. Nets probably partially responsible. Probably 5 times as many fishermen now.
6. Louis Schlitt Boat Livery. 2211 River Road, Box 75, St. Clair. 15 boats. (Has outside job). Does not believe business will be good this year because of war, defense work, tire shortage, etc. May pull his boats out of water.
7. George Ross. 2611 River Road, St. Clair. 16 boats. (Has outside job). Thinks there are as many fish now as ever, only more fishermen. St. Clair River is the only place that he knows of where fishermen can get fish day after day.
8. Stewart Cunningham. Cunningham Boat Livery. 3101¹/₂ River Road, St. Clair. Only 35 boats now. He works in factory and wife runs boat livery. They also have restaurant. Will do best they can to fill out creel census blanks but during periods when busy, it is doubtful whether they will be able to handle it.
9. T. A. Parker Boat Livery. 1319 N. River Road, St. Clair. 37 boats. Have restaurant also.

Jack Bowman

1. Brass Button Boat Livery. North River Road, St. Clair. 6 boats.
2. M. (Ma) Hanson. North River Road, St. Clair. 7 boats.
3. Walter Struebing. Bob's Boat Livery. 2050 North River Road, Marine City. 21 boats. Called twice--not home either time.
4. Paul Barnett. 5678 River Road. 30 boats. Not too willing to cooperate.
5. Marine City Campsite. 5771 N. River Road, Marine City. 17 boats. Fishing better this spring than for last 5 years.
6. Sonny's Boat Livery. 6005 North River Road, Marine City. 21 boats.
7. Fishers Boat Livery. 6209 North River Road, Marine City. Not open yet. No boats in water.
8. Langell Boat Livery. 6215 North River Road, Marine City. Not open yet. No boats in water.
9. Wes Earl. North Market Street, North Marine City. Not open yet.
10. Another livery (next door to one above) is not open yet. No name located at this place.
11. Beebe's Boat Livery. 1114 Bell River, Marine City. 35 boats.
12. George Argitis. South Parker Street, Marine City. 4 boats. This man sells bait, pop, etc. Caters to negroes. Most people here fish on breakwater. He said he would "attempt" to contact all fishermen. Many suckers, catfish, and bullheads caught here.
13. Adam Otrampke Boat Livery. 6551 St. Clair River Drive. 22 boats now, has sold some.
14. Peter Neuser. 3535 South River Drive. 30 boats.
15. Dronillards Boat Livery. Roberts Landing, Michigan. 40 boats.

Restaurant, store, gas station and beer garden. Not willing to cooperate. Has too much work to do--store, boats, motors, docks, minnows, oil, gasoline. Left blanks and told him we would appreciate it if he would record number of fishermen if unable to complete creel census blank.

16. Eagles Boat Livery. 9712 S. River Drive. 33 boats. Also has tavern. Says that all commercial fishing should be prohibited. He is planning on selling all of his boats. Has sold between 12 and 15 boats so far. Things are too uncertain so he plans to concentrate on tavern business now.
17. Ramsays Boat Livery. 9727 River Road. 15 boats. Mostly night fishermen use his boats and he doubts whether he will be able to get any information from night fishermen, because he cannot stay up all night.
18. North Algona Boat Livery. 2218 St. Clair River Drive. 24 boats. Has other people's boats here, also.
19. Walter Schuknecht. 2010 St. Clair River Drive. 5 boats.
20. George Douglas Boat Livery. Algona. 6 boats.
21. Beemer and Smith. 702 St. Clair River Drive, Algona. 14 boats.
22. Laires Boat Livery. 6169 South River Drive, Algona. 15 boats.
23. Wells Landing, Harsons Island. Sans Souci, Michigan. 30 boats and 2 motor launches. Been in business 20 years (3 years here and 17 years on Anchor Bay). Thinks trout that were planted will go to Lake Huron. Fishing not as good now as formerly. Canadians have better fishing than we do because water is cleaner and less pollution. Pollution big problem here. International waters makes cooperation poor. Carp fishermen should not be allowed to fish at certain times.

24. Deckers Landing, Anchor Bay (Fair Haven). 28 boats.
25. Caseys Boat Livery. 9093 Anchor Bay Road. 20 boats.
26. Malinsky Bros. Boat Livery. 7389 Anchor Bay Drive, Fair Haven. 2 boats. Commercial fishermen (especially carp) should not be allowed to seine during bass spawning season.
27. Herman Whitford--Herm's Boat Livery. Fair Haven. 17 boats.
28. Eds Place. 7795 Dixie Highway, Fair Haven. 6 boats.
29. Bud's Boat Livery. 8287 Dixie Highway, Fair Haven. 22 boats.
30. Kleins Boat Livery. 6350 Dixie Highway, Fair Haven. 22 boats.
31. Walt's Boat Livery. 6371 Dixie Highway, Fair Haven. 25 boats.
32. Taps Place. 8123 Dixie Highway, Fair Haven. 10 boats.
33. Oceanside Boat Livery. 7738 Dixie Highway, Fair Haven. 15 boats.
Not home when we called.
34. Mar-Chuk Boat Livery. 8835 Dixie Highway, Fair Haven. 21 boats.
35. Anchorville Boat Livery. 9691 Dixie Highway, Anchorville. 15 boats.
Conservation Officer Bowman arrested this man while we were there making contact. It is possible that this livery will not be too willing to cooperate now.
36. Chester Bowers, Courtesy Boats. 10329 Bowers Ct., Anchorville. 53 boats.

Earl Goff

1. Lozen Boat Livery. New Baltimore. 10 boats. Lived here 1/2 years and thinks fishing should be stopped for 2 years.
2. Abe Goulette Boat Livery. New Baltimore. 10 boats. This man cannot read or write. He will ask fishermen to fill in blanks.
3. Franks Livery. New Baltimore. Not home when we called.
4. Joe's Boat Livery. New Baltimore. 15 boats. Not home when we called.

5. A. H. Champine. 3553 James Street, New Baltimore. Located on Salt River. 12 boats. Thinks Canadians should not be allowed to fish commercially.
6. Peets Boat Livery. Salt River and next to one listed above. 6 boats.
7. Bill Champine Boat Livery. Salt River. Next to one listed above. 15 boats.
8. Harry's Boat Livery. 2037 Private Drive, on River Vans. This livery is just 3 miles from Selfridge Field. 10 boats.
9. Christie Schmidt. 1220 Rosso Road, Mt. Clemens. One mile from Selfridge Field. 30 boats.
10. Martins Boat Livery. 1223 Rosso Road, Mt. Clemens. (Next to Chris Schmidt). 17 boats.
11. Gills Boat Livery. 6282 N. River Road, Mt. Clemens. On Clinton River. 2 boats now.
12. Ronick Boat Livery. 6465 N. River Rd., Mt. Clemens. On Clinton River. 28 boats.
13. Endels Boat Livery. N. River Road, Mt. Clemens. On Clinton River. 12 boats.
14. Chas. J. Meldrum. 6525 N. River Road, Mt. Clemens. On Clinton River. 25 boats. Department should plant more perch here.
15. Larry's Boat Livery (and Works), on Clinton River. Not home when we called.
16. Wood Boat Livery. South River Road, on Clinton River. 146 boats. Said he would not be able to keep track of number of fishermen or number of fish caught. Said we could come around later on and get number of boats rented. We left blanks with him but doubt whether he cooperates. Said he rented between 2,700 and 3,000 boats last year.

17. Martell Boat Livery. South River Road. On Clinton River. 13 boats.
18. Rippe Boat Livery. S. River Road. On Clinton River. 20? boats. Not home when we called.
19. Lindeman's Boat Livery. S. River Road. On Clinton River. 10 boats. Closed. Does not know whether he will open up this year or not.
20. Al Gashow Boat Livery. 8635 S. River Road. On Clinton River. Mt. Clemens. 21 boats. This man keeps a record of size, etc., of every muskie brought into his livery each year. So far this year 22 have been taken.
21. Thomas Barney. 6881 S. River Road, Mt. Clemens. On Clinton River. 18 boats. Perch most important fish in Lake St. Clair. Caught the year around. Size of perch that are caught have been getting smaller each year. Thinks they should have closed season on perch during February, March and perhaps April. Perch, pike and walleyes should be given a chance to spawn.
22. Hutton Boat Livery. Mt. Clemens. 17 boats. Not many people fishing this year.
23. Supple Boat Livery. Route 6, Mt. Clemens. 13 boats.
24. Huron Boat Livery. Mt. Clemens. Refused to cooperate in no uncertain manner.
25. Beckman Boat Livery. Mt. Clemens. Out of business.
26. Lakeside Boathouse. Route 6, Mt. Clemens. 11 boats. Neither the man nor his wife can read or write. We left blanks and he will attempt to get fishermen to fill them in.
27. E. Velgers Boat Livery. 2229 Jefferson Avenue, Mt. Clemens. 25 boats.

Fred A. Eckhout

1. Joseph C. Frey. 11601/2 Klank Avenue, Detroit. 35 boats.
2. Walter Gerds. 11671/2 Klank Avenue, Detroit. 38 boats.

3. Rose Boat Livery. 11505 Riverside Road, Detroit. 30 boats.
4. Several liveries out of business. One of these was located at mouth of the River Rouge.

Isaac Peabody

1. Clarke Boat Livery. 1389 W. Jefferson, Ecorse. 32 boats.
2. Joe Baumea. 1109 Rogers Ct., Ecorse. This man also refused to cooperate and said so in good plain English.
3. Albert E. Palmer. 1137 W. Jefferson, Ecorse. 2 boats.
4. Cavanaugh Boat Livery. 1137 W. Jefferson, Ecorse. 1 boat.
5. Spades Boat Livery. 1633 W. Jefferson, Ecorse. 11 boats.
6. Ragen Boat Livery. 1635 W. Jefferson, Ecorse. 8 boats.
7. Oberts Boat Livery. 167 Middle Street, Wyandotte. 31 boats. This man has not yet placed his boats in the water. Will probably put them in if Coast Guard relaxes rules a bit. Blanks were left and he will get dock fishermen until boats go in.

INSTITUTE FOR FISHERIES RESEARCH

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