

Public Meeting on Smallmouth Bass Management for Green Bay & Northern Lake MI



- Good evening
- Nick Legler, DNR
- Welcome & thank you for attending!
- In person & MS-Teams
 - # in person
 - # MS Teams
- Quick check for MS-Teams
 - audio
 - raise hands
 - chat

- *Mon Nov 4 Green Bay*
- *Wed Nov 6 Sturgeon Bay*

Public Meeting on Smallmouth Bass Management for Green Bay & Northern Lake MI



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1) DNR Staff Presentations

- Introduction by Nick Legler
- Surveys/studies, factors impacting bass populations, potential or proposed regulation by Fisheries Biologist Scott Hansen

2) Public and/or Angler Feedback

- Questions & initial feedback
- Formal feedback questionnaire (7:30 PM or earlier ?)
- Continued open comments, feedback & discussion
- Also, public comment period via email to DNRLAKEMICHIGANPLAN@wisconsin.gov through Sun Nov 17
(*email address – handout & chat*)

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If on MS-Teams, we'll follow up with a poll via email.

Please provide your email in the chat or request a poll via email to

WIS

DNRLAKEMICHIGANPLAN@wisconsin.gov

DNR.WI.GOV

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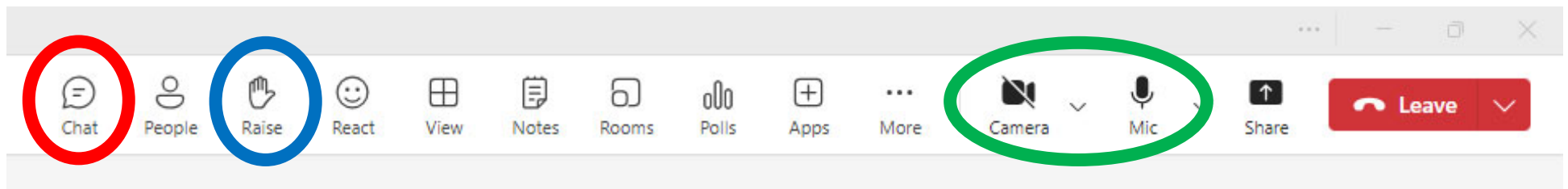
Meeting Logistics:

- In person = raise hand; speak up or mic

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- **Online** = raise hand; comment in chat (Brad, Dave); mic muted & camera off

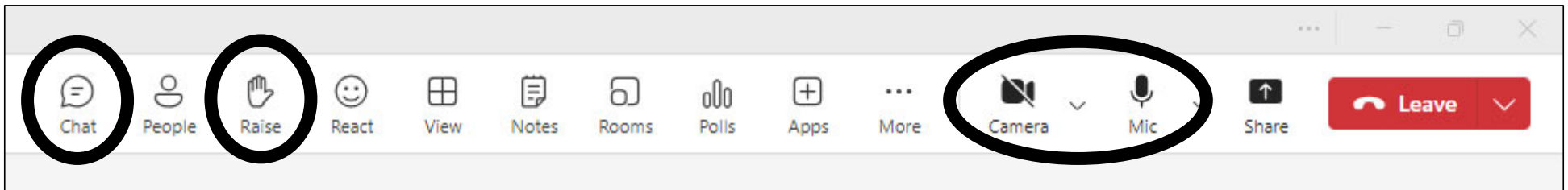


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- Sign in sheet
 - in person = paper, with names & emails
 - online = participants list (please check names entered in MS Teams; email chat)



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- Meeting being recorded for posting online – for further sharing of info/presentations
 - <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/fishing/lakemichigan/GreenBaySmallmouthBass>
 - <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/> → search “Green Bay Smallmouth Bass”
 - website = handout & chat

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2) Public and/or Angler Feedback

- Value in tonight's meeting = we all have different ideas & perspectives to share.
- e.g., whether recreational angler, tournament angler, professional guide, etc.
- e.g., whether shore angler or boat angler
- e.g., simply interested in smallmouth bass
- We can all provide helpful input into management decisions; appreciate; represent



Briefly Acknowledge (*Highlights & Context* 2023)

Shore, Pier & Boat:

- 2023 creel survey estimates (*Door & Kewaunee County waters of Green Bay*):
- Catch = 113,236
- Harvest = 2,724



Professional Guides:

- 2023 guide reports (*Green Bay*):
- Catch = 11,766
- Harvest = 25



SMB Tournaments:

- 2023 = 13 permitted events in Door Co (with results received)
- Registered = 3,335
- Harvest = 13



Briefly Acknowledge (*Highlights & Context; DNR*)

My Experience:

- Caught some, but few GB
- Most of my local bass fishing experience is from shore with my kids



DNR Colleagues & I – Netting Surveys:

Year	Catch	Location
2023	1,540	Door County
2012-23	33,328	Door County



Tonight's Meeting

1) DNR Staff Presentations (DNR's perspectives)

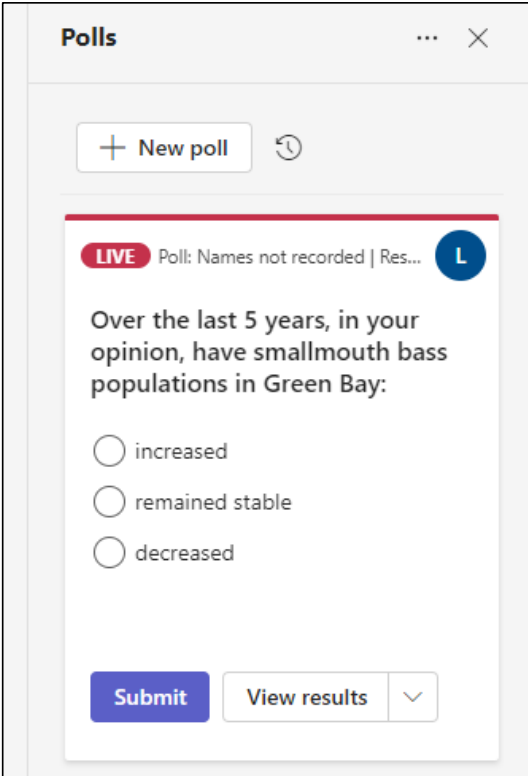
- Introduction by Nick Legler
- Surveys/studies, factors impacting bass populations, potential or proposed regulation by Fisheries Biologist Scott Hansen

2) Public and/or Angler Feedback (public & angler's perspectives)

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- Formal feedback questionnaire (7:30 PM or earlier ?)
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Formal Feedback Questionnaire

- 6 questions total
 - Goal = some focused & structured feedback
- Format
 - Paper questionnaire (*in person*)
 - Follow up via email (MS-teams)
- Timing
 - 5 questions at end (*7:30 PM or earlier ?*)
 - 1 question upfront / now (*preview #1...*)



The screenshot shows a Microsoft Teams poll window titled "Polls". At the top right, there are three dots and a close button (X). Below the title bar, there is a "New poll" button with a plus sign and a refresh icon. The main content area features a red "LIVE" indicator, the text "Poll: Names not recorded | Res...", and a blue circular icon with the letter "L". The question text reads: "Over the last 5 years, in your opinion, have smallmouth bass populations in Green Bay:". Below the question are three radio button options: "increased", "remained stable", and "decreased". At the bottom, there is a blue "Submit" button, a "View results" button, and a dropdown arrow.

First Poll Question

Over the last 5 years, in your opinion, have smallmouth bass populations in Green Bay:

- a) increased
- b) remained stable
- c) decreased

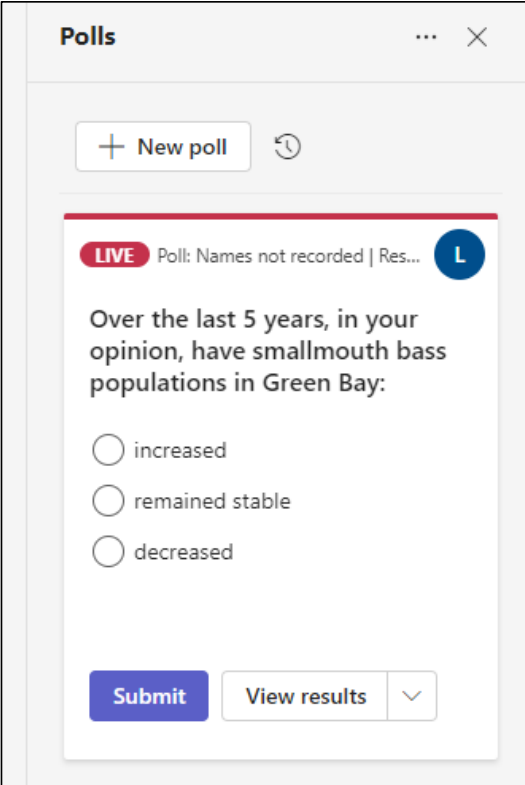
Note:

- This question same as meeting 4 years ago
- Did perceptions change or stay the same, both since last meeting & going into tonight.
- *Distribute paper questionnaire now...*
- *If online, we'll follow up with a poll via email. Please provide your email in the chat or request a poll via email to DNRLAKEMICHIGANPLAN@wisconsin.gov*

Preview of Next 5 Poll Questions (7:30 PM ?)

Focused & structured feedback:

- 1) Angler satisfaction
- 2) Areas or locations fished
- 3) Fishing activities
- 4) Factors impacting smallmouth bass
- 5) Proposed regulation change (Scott...)



The screenshot shows a web interface for creating and viewing polls. At the top, there's a 'Polls' header with a close button. Below it is a '+ New poll' button and a refresh icon. The main content area displays a 'LIVE' poll with the title 'Poll: Names not recorded | Res...' and a blue 'L' icon. The question is 'Over the last 5 years, in your opinion, have smallmouth bass populations in Green Bay:'. There are three radio button options: 'increased', 'remained stable', and 'decreased'. At the bottom, there are 'Submit' and 'View results' buttons, with a dropdown arrow next to 'View results'.

This Poll & Public Feedback is Important

Past:

- 3 Bass Meetings
 - October 18, 2017
 - October 15, 2019
 - October 13, 2020
- PDF Slides & Notes
- <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/fishing/lakemichigan/GreenBaySmallmouthBass> “Green Bay Smallmouth Bass”

Present (*tonight*):

Future:

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Future:

- Public comment period via email to DNRLAKEMICHIGANPLAN@wisconsin.gov until Sun Nov 17
(pending tonight's feedback, & upcoming regulation development steps & approvals...)
- Spring hearings April 2025 (??) *(last slide...)*

Summarize Rule Proposal Schedule or Timeline

Jan 2024	Develop & submit regulation proposal forms to DNR Team Supervisors
March 1, 2024	Approved proposal forms submitted to DNR Policy Specialist, who sends to DNR Species Teams
April 11, 2024	Advisory spring hearings - new proposals based on 2024 Spring Hearings advisory questions may be written outside the timeline outlined here
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July 2024 FMPT	Proposals reviewed by FMPT
July/Aug, 2024	Write scope statement and get governor's office approval
Oct 2024	NRB scope statement approval
Oct/Nov, 2024	Write rule language, review, consult with proposal authors
Dec, 2024	Green sheet package due to NRB for hearing question review/approval
Jan 2025	NRB approval of hearing questions
Feb 2025	Economic impact comment period, submit documents to Legislative Reference Bureau
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Initial Steps (already complete):

- Initial public feedback (2017, 2019, 2020, etc.)
- Develop draft regulation
- Review & approvals by several DNR teams & supervisors

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Important Next Steps:

- Finalize rule language & spring hearing questions
- Approval of hearing questions by NRB (Dec/Jan)
- Today's meeting = another opportunity for public feedback (i.e., to help inform this process prior to NRB's next review & approval of the spring hearing question)

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Pending tonight's feedback & subsequent approvals:

- Spring hearing in April 2025 (*another opportunity for public input*)
- Approval by NRB & Governor's office
- New regulation possibly **spring 2026**

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Green Bay Smallmouth Bass Updates and Rule Proposal

Wisconsin Department of Resources Public Meetings

Green Bay/Sturgeon Bay

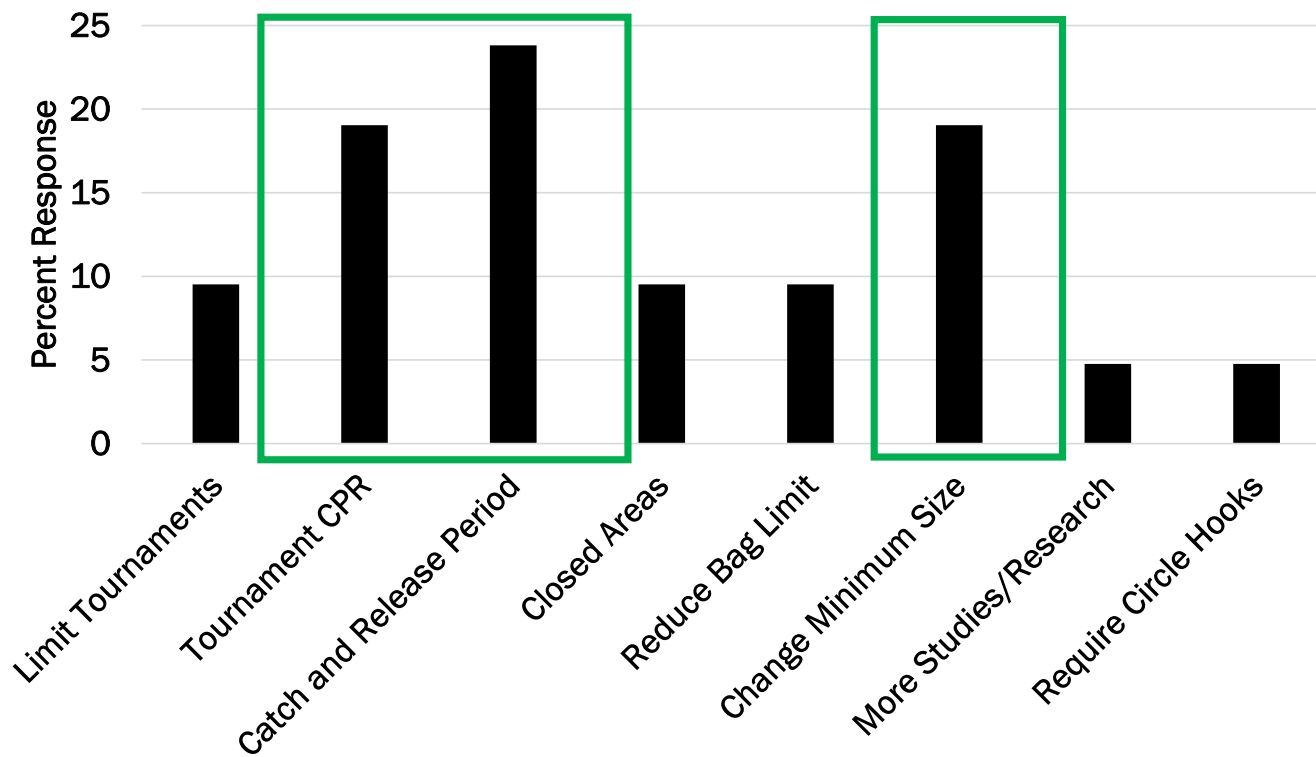
November 4 and 6, 2024



Past Meeting Review

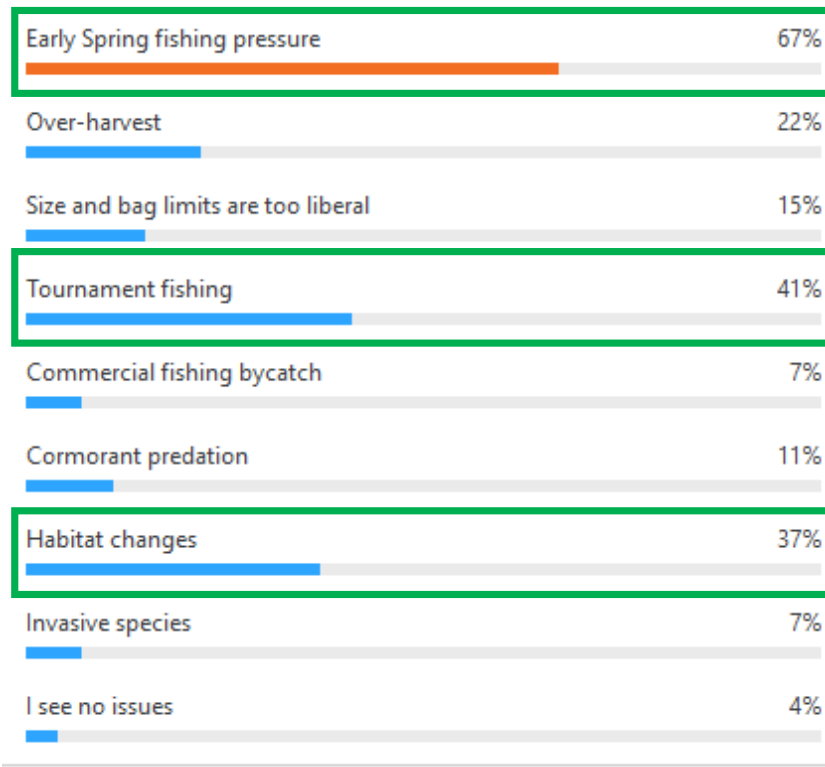
- Informational meetings held 2017, 2019, 2020
 - Survey data
 - Research results and needs
 - Genetic analysis
 - Lesions – largemouth bass virus
 - Fishing regulations
 - Tournament regulations
 - Concerns, feedback and polls
 - Mink River Refuge Rule implemented 2020

Comments 2017/2019 meetings



Poll response 2020

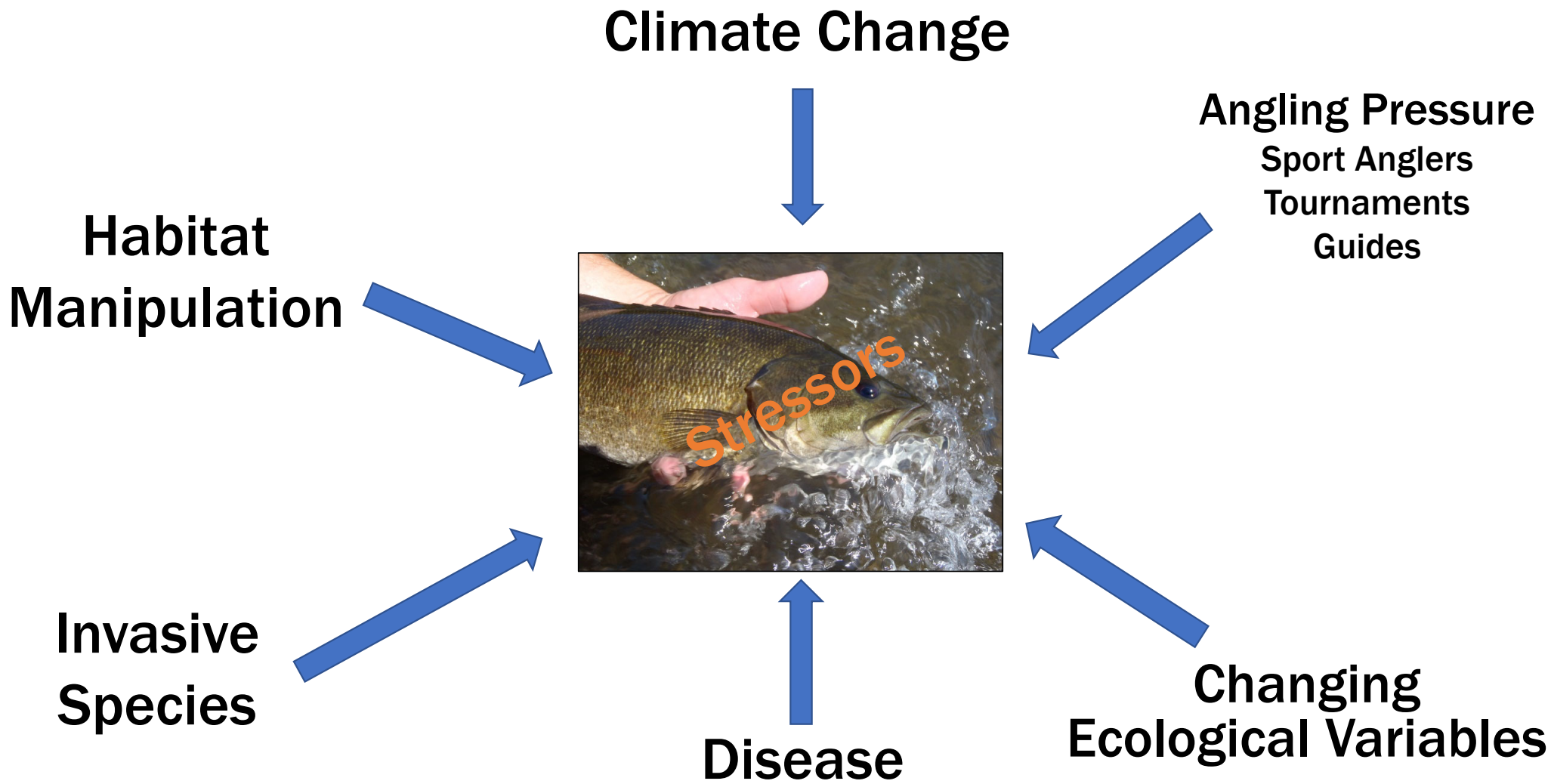
1. If you had to choose one issue you believe is impacting the quality of smallmouth bass fishing, would it be? (Please Select Your Top 2 Answers) (Multiple choice)



Proposed Rule Change

Extend catch and release season for Wisconsin waters of Green Bay and northern Lake Michigan until July 1 (beginning early March)

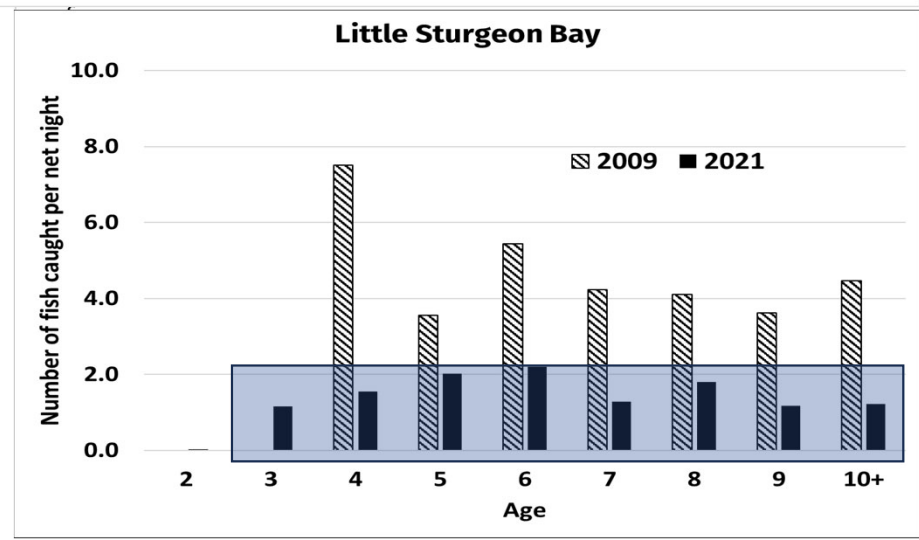
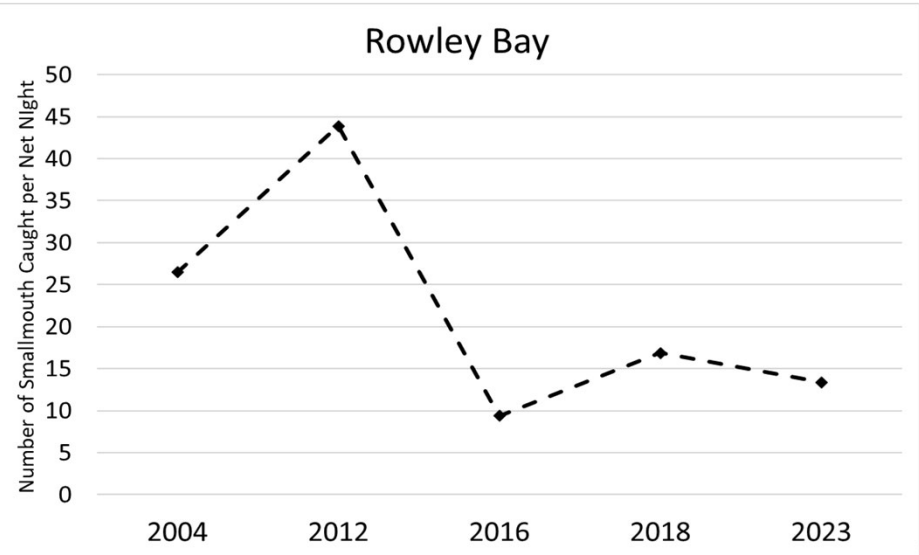
Current harvest season runs early May – early March



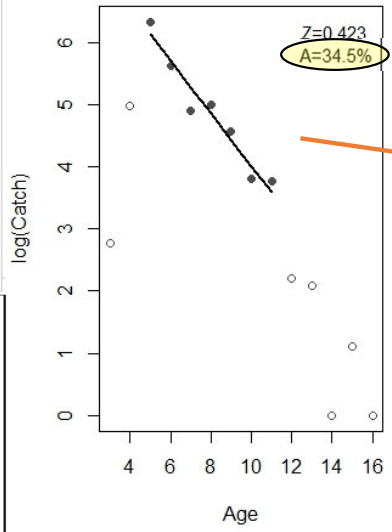


WI DNR Assessments

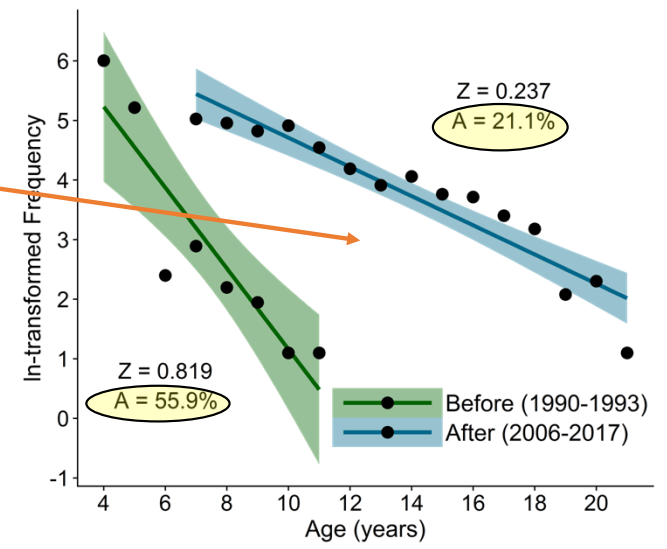
- Assess populations
 - Pre-spawn period (mostly adults)
 - Rotate among populations
- Smallmouth (recruits)
 - Young-of-year
- Nest snorkeling
 - Nest success



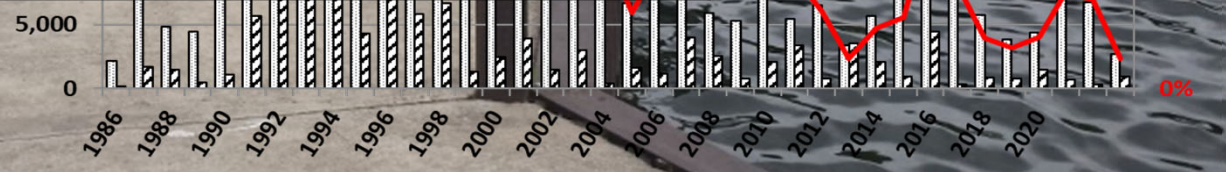
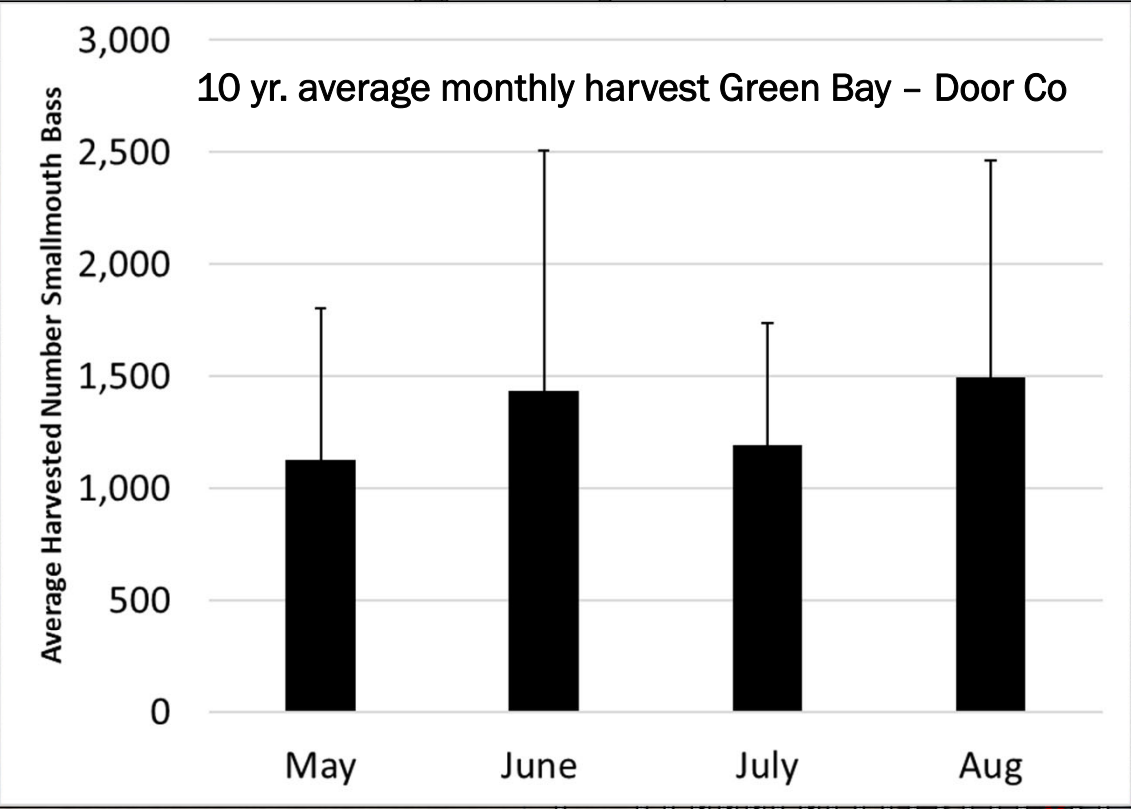
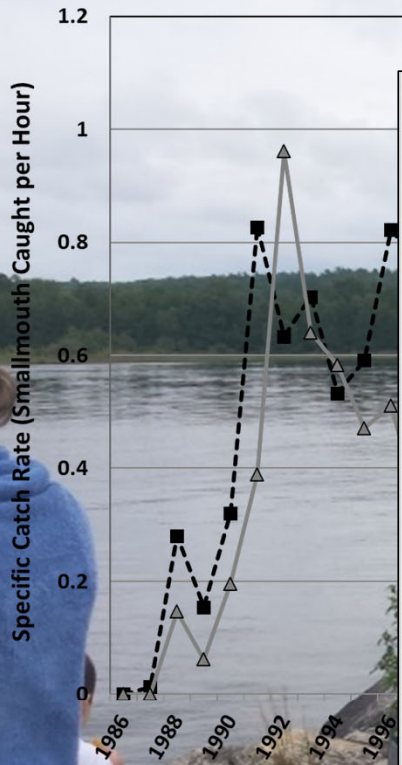
Sturgeon Bay Area



Chequamegon Bay



Annual mortality 33-39% for Sturgeon Bay population

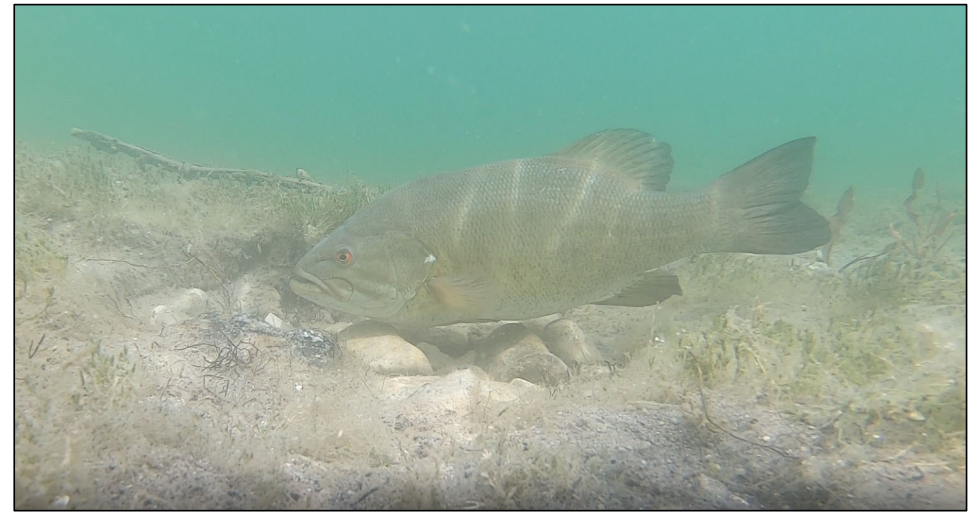


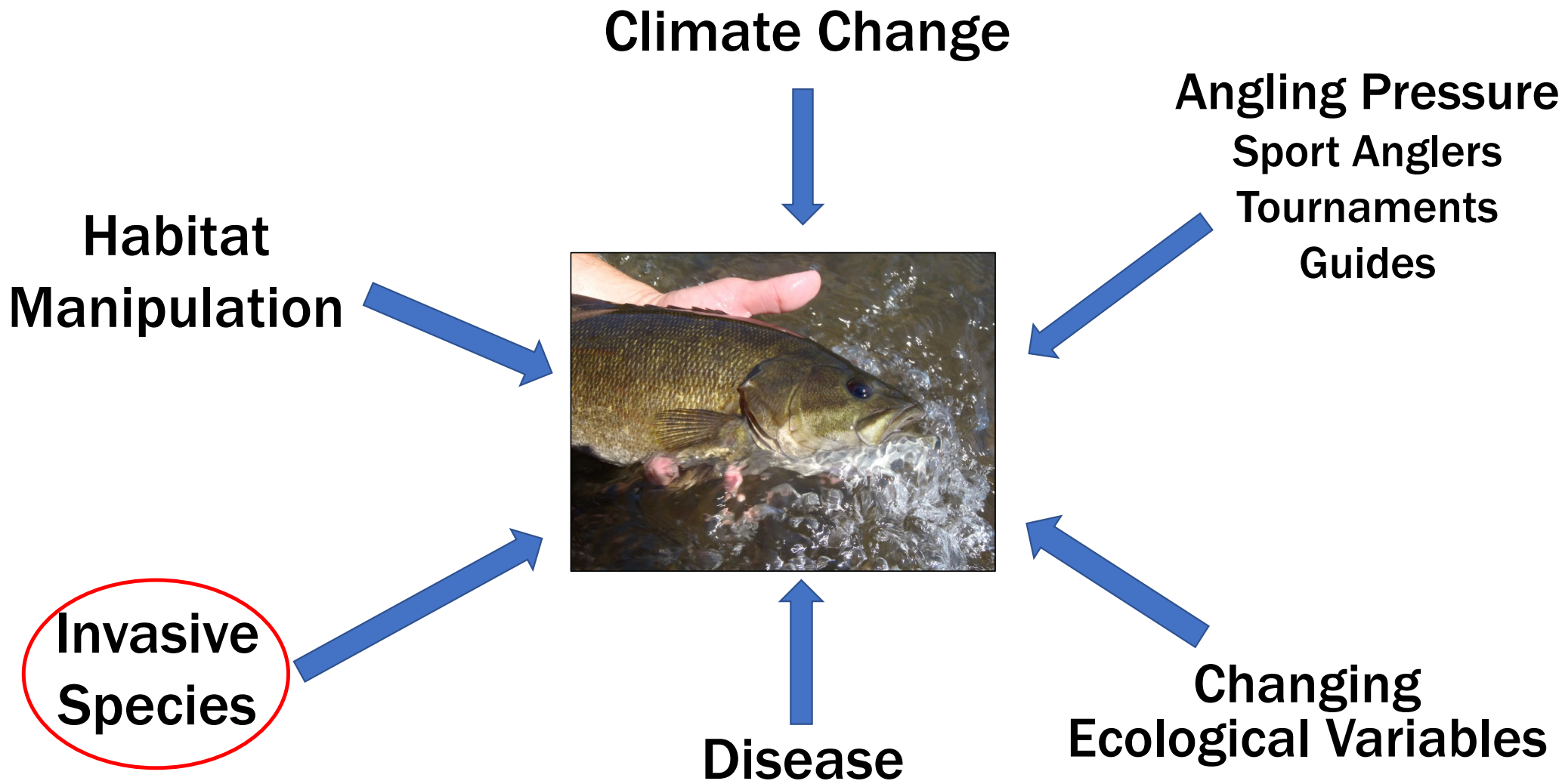
Public Opinion

- 1994 petition to delay bass season until June 20 (264 signatures)
- 1997 petition from landowners Rileys and Sand Bay to prohibit tournaments during spawning (64 signatures)
- 2003 WCC advisory question: attendees voted 2 to 1 in favor of more conservative seasons for smallmouth bass including no harvest during the spawning period
- 2017-2020 smallmouth meetings : two of the top three suggestions were related to ‘spring catch-and-release’ period for bass and ‘tournament catch-photo-release’ .

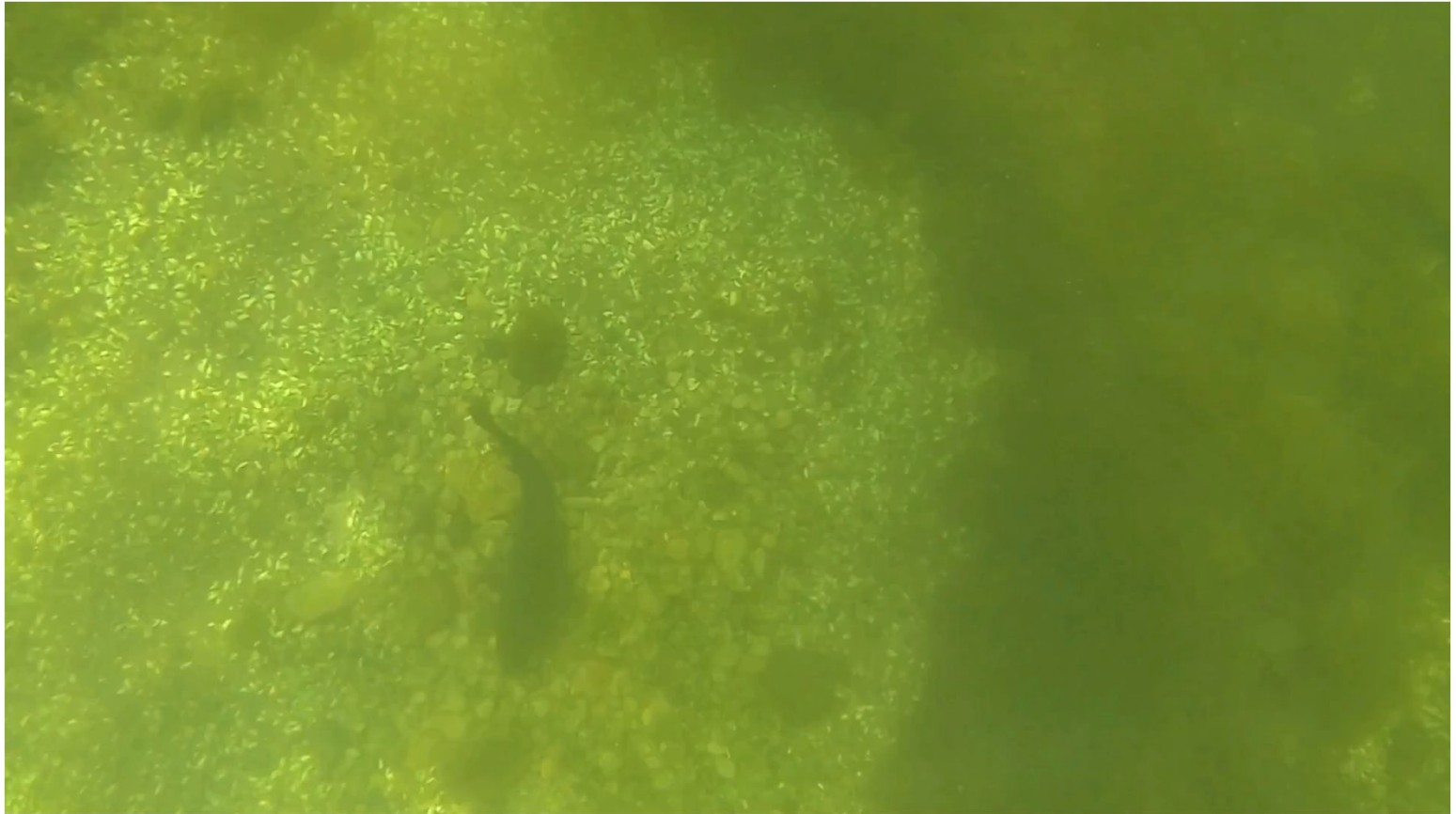
Biotic/abiotic drivers

- Biotic
 - Invasive species (Round gobies)
 - Largemouth bass virus
- Abiotic
 - Warming climate (earlier spawn)
 - Environmental changes (record high and low water levels)
 - Shoreline hardening
 - Can bring on changes to the biota





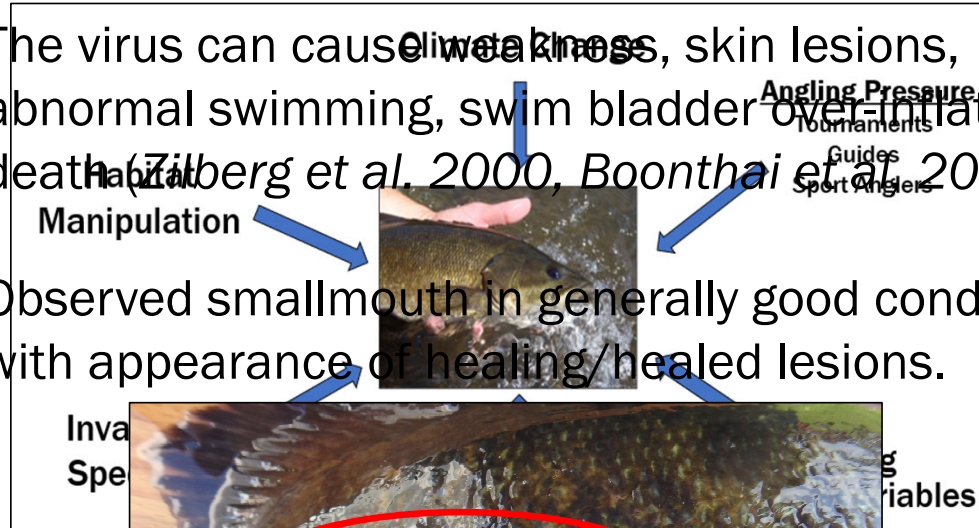
Round gobies.....





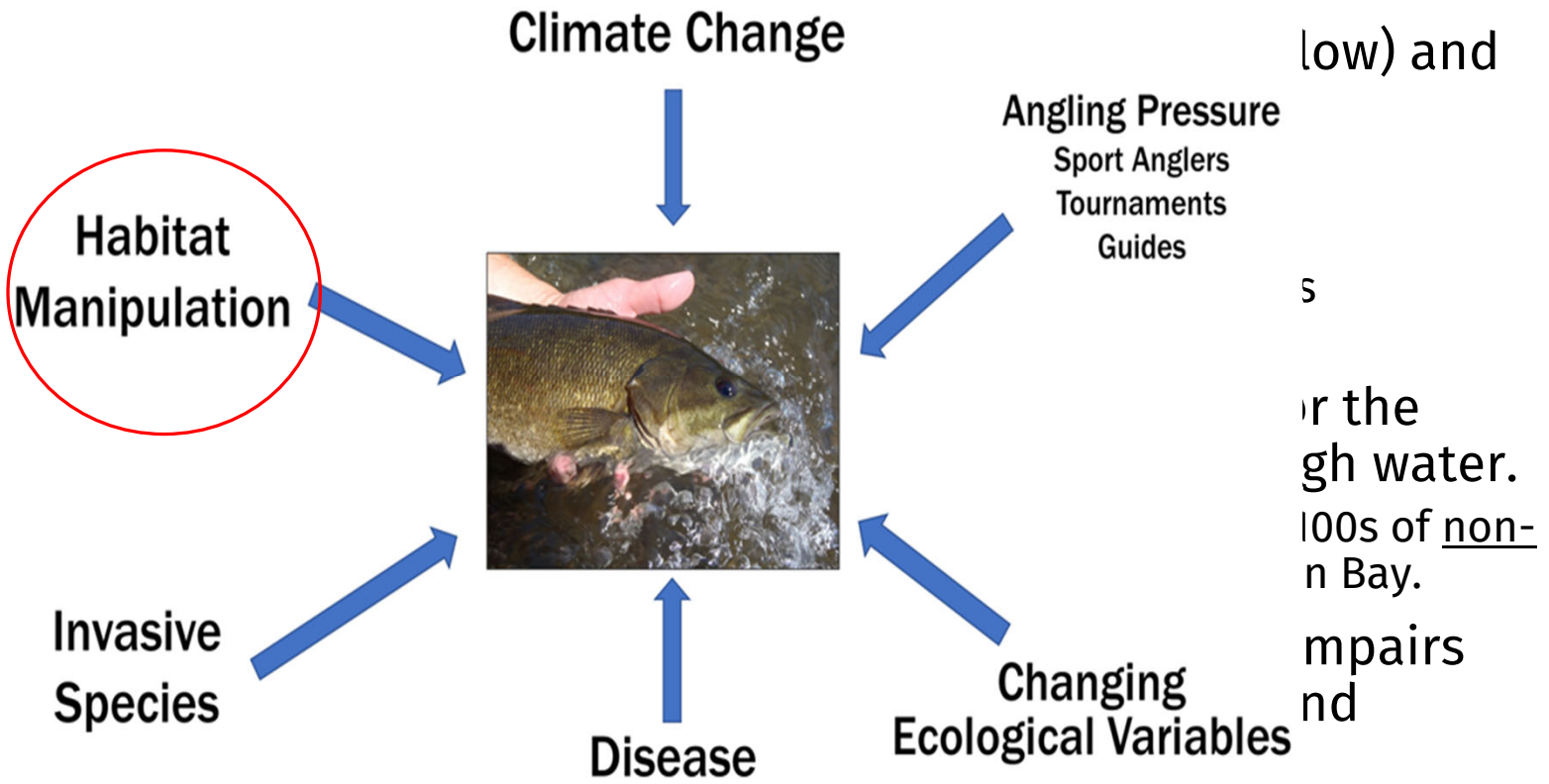
- Largemouth Bass Virus Isolated from smallmouth bass in Green Bay 2021

- The virus can cause **live weakness**, skin lesions, abnormal swimming, swim bladder over-inflation and death (Zilberg et al. 2000, Boonthai et al. 2018).
- Observed smallmouth in generally good condition with appearance of healing/healed lesions.



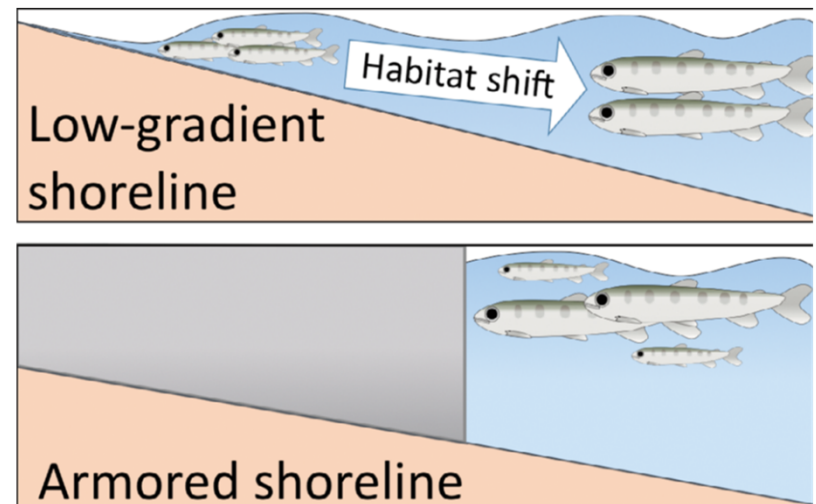
Shoreline Modification

- Great Lakes 2020 (high).
 - Dredging
 - 2018- Riprap
 - 2020 - Eme implement
- During 2019- installation
 - 2023 – Pres compliance
- Shoreline de ecological fu Pederson Jr.



Shoreline Armoring Impacts

- Can impair habitat functions and processes including predator refuge, prey production, reproduction and developmental habitat shifts.
- Influences the connectivity between lake and terrestrial ecosystems and interrupts the natural flow of land-based nutrients and organisms into the water
- Natural shoreline absorbs and disperses the energy of waves while shoreline modifications reflect most wave energy back into open water, accentuating shoreline erosion
 - May exacerbate the impact of storms that negatively impact smallmouth bass nesting success

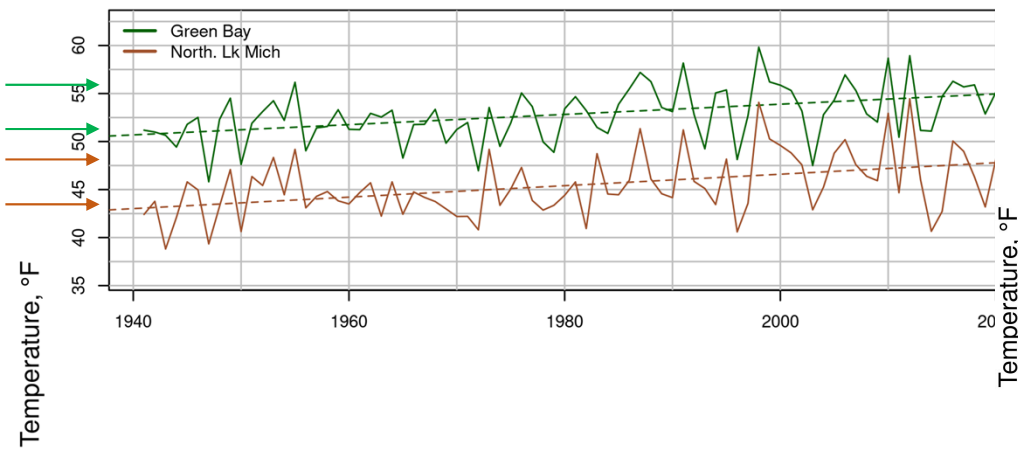




WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES | DNR.WI.GOV

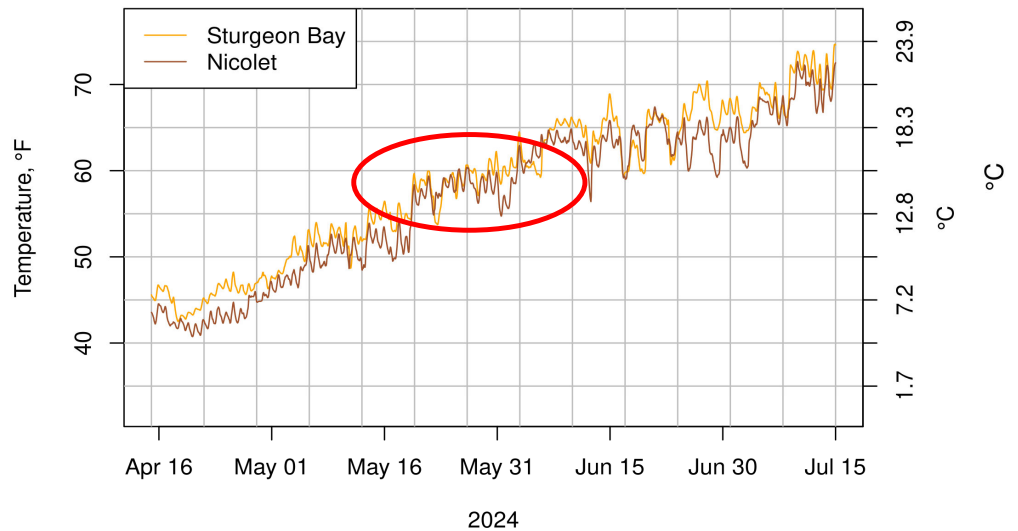
Water temperature changes

Simulated Average May-June Temperatures, 1941-2022



Modeled Surface Temperature

Modeled Surface Temperature



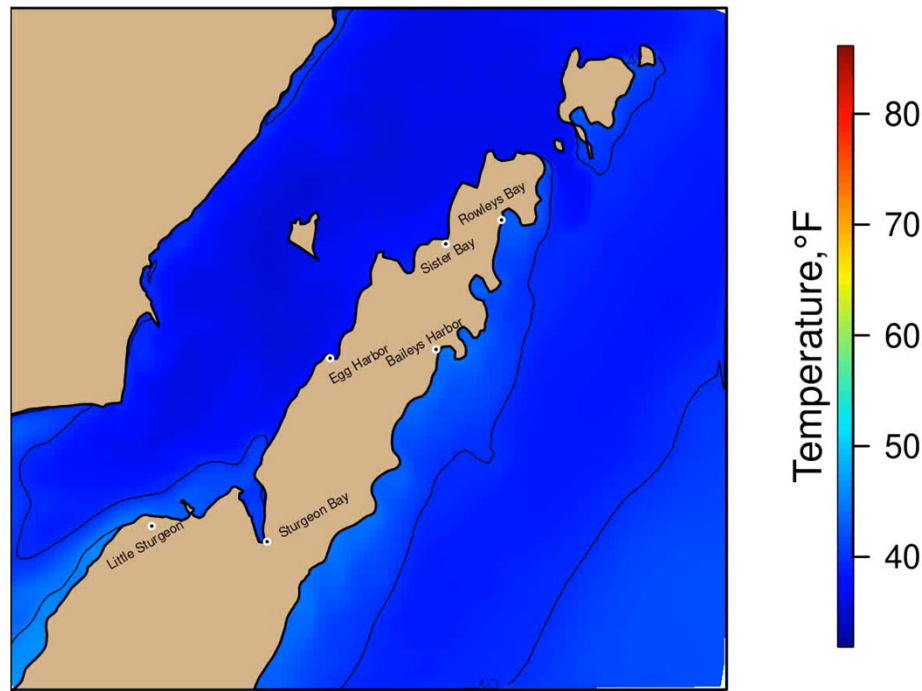
Data from Dr. Hazem Abdelhady (*unpublished*)



NOAA GLERL: <https://www.glerl.noaa.gov/res/glcfs/>

Water temperature variation

2023-04-30 19:00 CT

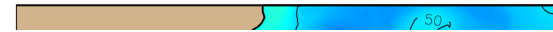


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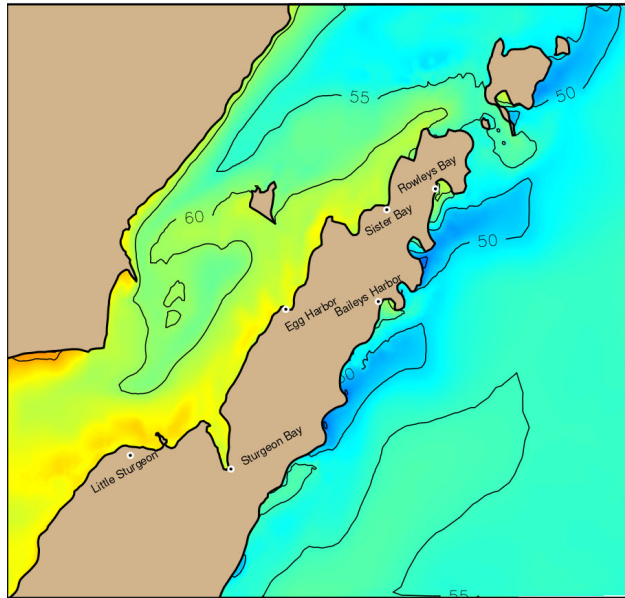
2018-06-02 19:00 CT



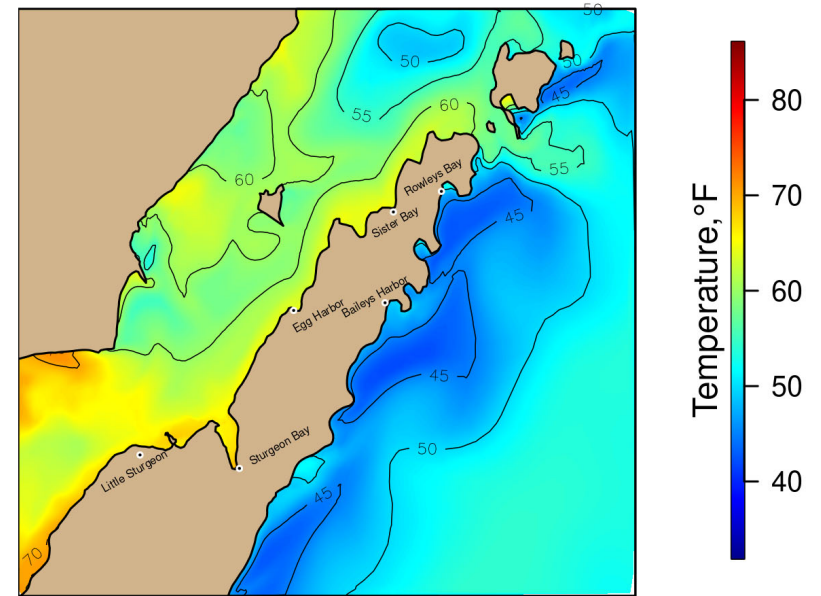
2021-05-29 07:00 CT



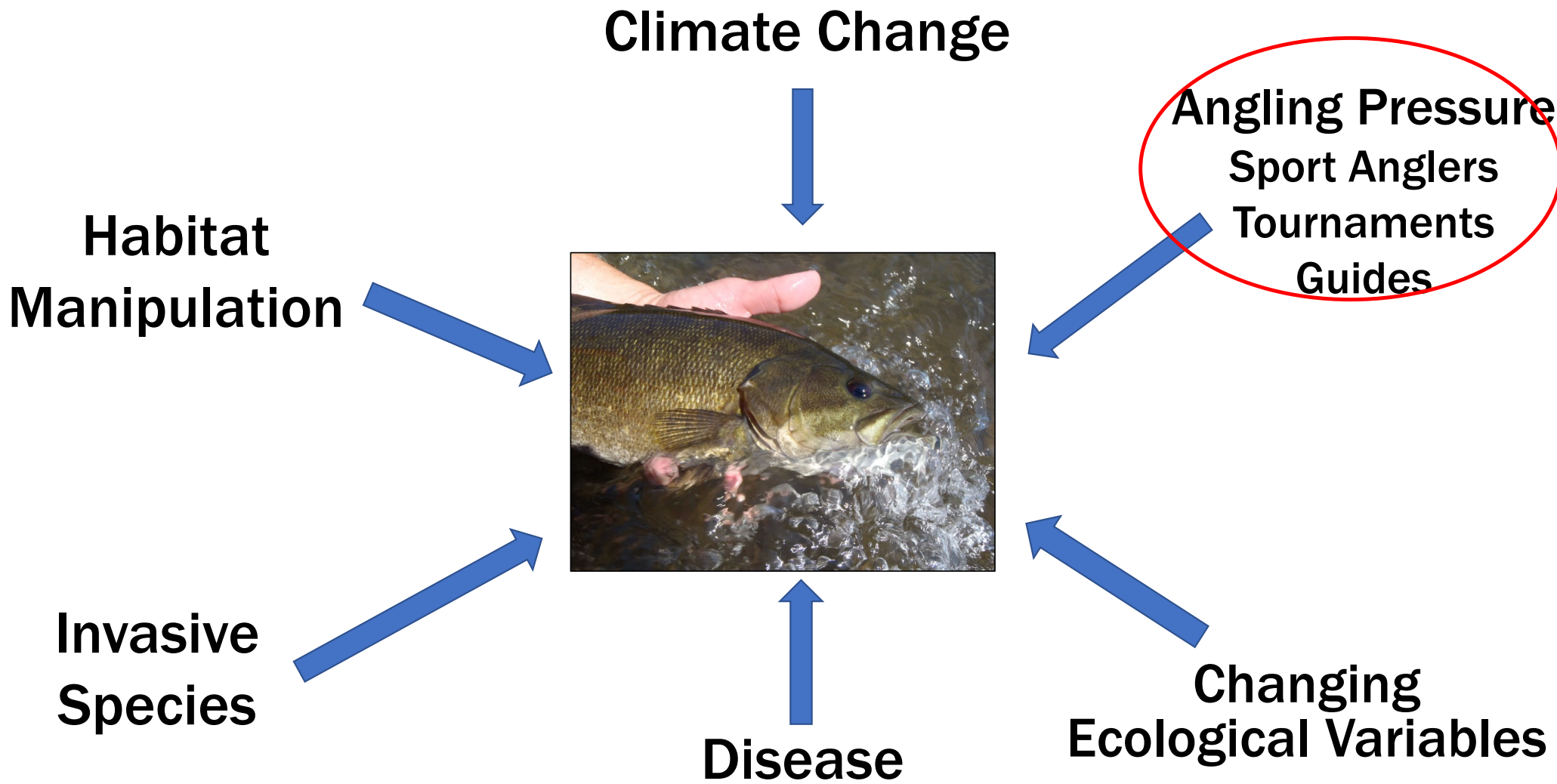
2021-06-04 19:00 CT



2021-06-07 13:00 CT



NOAA GLERL: <https://www.glerl.noaa.gov/res/glcfs/>





Bassmaster's 100 Best Bass Lakes of 2014 announced

By James Hall

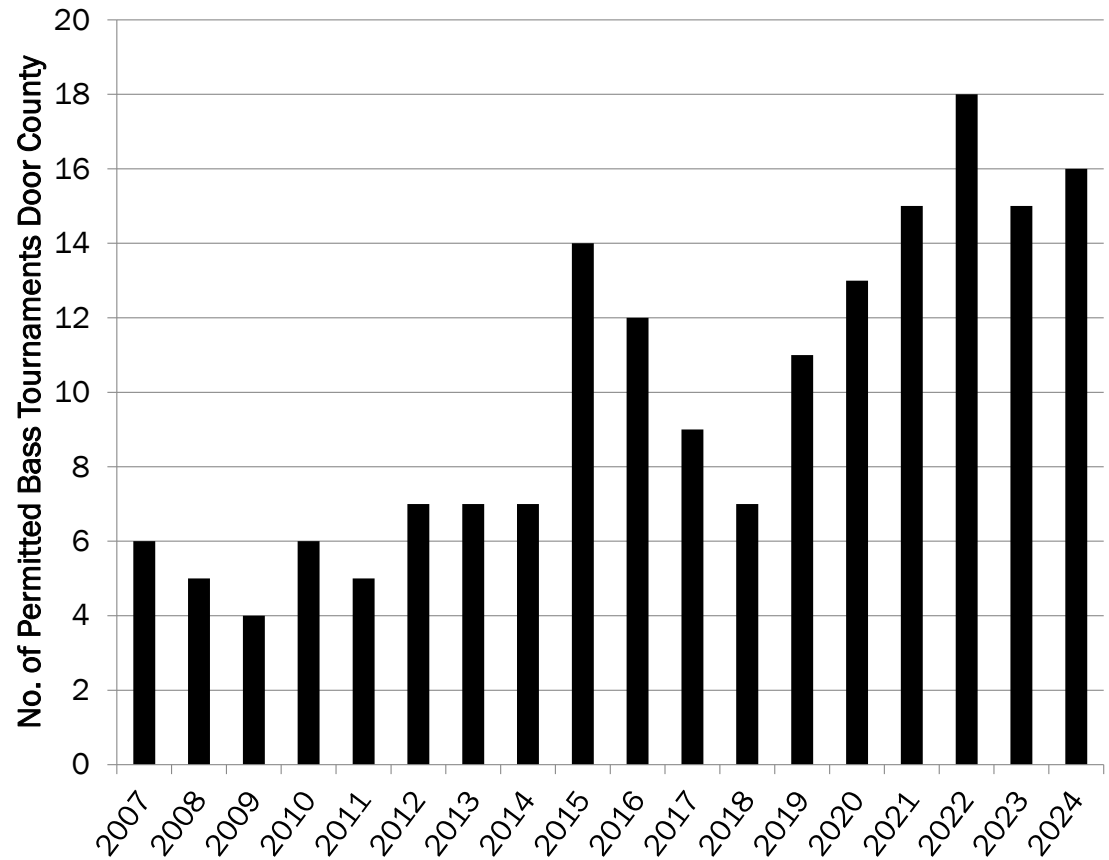
APR 28, 2014

Bassmaster Magazine's third annual ranking of America's best bass fisheries has been announced, and there is a new champion. Lake Michigan's Sturgeon Bay beat out the hottest fisheries in the U.S. to take the No. 1 spot for 2014. Texas and California tied for the states with the most entries on the list; both have eight lakes ranked in the Top 100. Some stalwart lakes fell out of the rankings completely, new lakes were added, and



Photo courtesy of the Sturgeon Bay Visitor Center
Gracing the list for the first time, Sturgeon Bay in Wisconsin tops the 2014 100 Best Bass Lakes list.

Bass Tournaments



Tournaments

- 2000: Voluntary tournament boundaries
 - ~1996 fish restocked along Door Co shoreline via bait truck
- 2016: Met with tourn organizers to discuss possible modifications to tournament protocols
- 2017-2020: Smallmouth meetings : two of the top three suggestions were related to ‘tournament catch-photo-release’ and implementing a ‘catch-and-release’ period for bass
- 2023-24: City of Sturgeon Bay resolutions to ban weigh-ins at City property 2023-24

Regional Smallmouth Bass Regulations

- Northern Zone WI - Smallmouth bass harvest third Saturday in June through the first Sunday in March of the following year
- Wisconsin-Michigan boundary waters - Smallmouth bass harvest third Saturday in June through November 30
- Beaver Island Archipelago: the possession season is July 1 - Dec. 31 and open to bass CR all year.
- Lk St Clair: possession season is third Sunday in June - Dec. 31.
- Canadian Zones surrounding Great Lakes: possession seasons begin end of June
- Lake Erie (OH): 1 fish 18"; May 1 – June 21.
- Lake Erie (NY): 1 fish 20"; Dec – June 14.
- Lake Erie (PA): 1 fish 20": April 13 – June 7

Smallmouth Research Studies

- Smallmouth nest success and YOY index (E. Naas/UWSP)
 - Results suggest environmental variable are key drivers
 - Low nest success, relatively



Photo credits: E. Naas

Location	Year(s)	N	Nest success (%)	Study
Nebish Lake, Wisconsin	1985	49	96	Raffetto et al. 1990
Nebish Lake, Wisconsin	1983	45	93	Raffetto et al. 1990
South Branch Lake, Maine	1972	26	88	Neves 1975
Lake Erie, Ontario	1983	87	87	Goff 1986
Nebish Lake, Wisconsin	1984	47	87	Raffetto et al. 1990
Lake Huron, Ontario	1973	13	85	Hurley 1975
Mississippi River, Ontario	1990-1995	452	84	Philipp et al. 1997
Lake Opeongo, Ontario	1993	76	82	Friesen 1998
Lake Opeongo, Ontario	1989	123	79	Friesen 1998
Lake Opeongo, Ontario	1992	92	77	Friesen 1998
Lake Opeongo, Ontario	1988	63	75	Friesen 1998
South Branch Lake, Maine	1971	15	67	Neves 1975
North Anna River, Virginia	1994	56	64	Knotek and Orth 1998
St. Lawrence River, Ontario	1990-1995	1864	58	Philipp et al. 1997
Sawyer Harbor	2022	31	55	this study
Lake Michigan, Michigan	1954	20	55	Latta 1956
Lake Michigan, Michigan	1955	28	54	Latta 1956
Charleston Lake, Ontario	1990-1995	1536	54	Philipp et al. 1997
Lake Opeongo, Ontario	2001	36	50	Steinhart et al. 2004
Little Sturgeon Bay	2022	27	48	this study
Lake Opeongo, Ontario	1991	72	47	Friesen 1998
Tadenac Lake, Ontario	1966	20	45	Turner and MacCrimmon 1970
Lake Opinicon, Ontario	1990-1995	1376	44-63	Philipp et al. 1997
Sawyer Harbor	2023	30	43	this study
North Anna River, Virginia	1992	105	43	Lukas and Orth 1995
Lake Erie, Ohio	1999	54	41	Steinhart et al. 2005
Lake Erie, Ontario	1982	33	33	Goff 1986
Lake Huron, Ontario	1974	40	33	Hurley 1975
Little Sturgeon Bay	2023	33	30	this study
Lake Erie, Ohio	2001	30	23	Steinhart et al. 2005
Lake Erie, Ohio	2000	47	21	Steinhart et al. 2005
Moonlight Bay	2022	30	20	this study
Detroit Harbor	2022	30	20	this study
Moonlight Bay	2023	54	13	this study
Detroit Harbor	2023	33	12	this study

Smallmouth nest success studies

E. Naas 2024

Smallmouth Research Studies

- Smallmouth nest success and YOY index (E. Naas/UWSP)
 - Results suggest environmental variable are key drivers
 - Low nest success, relatively
 - However, more research needed to assess angler impacts at specific locations given confounding issues
 - Full evaluation once we assess all populations at adult stage
 - YOY Index
 - Historical data intermittent and highly variable
 - Modified electrofishing best method
 - Full evaluation once we assess all populations at adult stage
- Telemetry and population genetic structure (UWSP)
 - Investigating spawning site fidelity and movement after relocation
 - Good data. Highly anticipated. Will be a couple years.

Summary

- Survey data generally show lower relative index of abundance
 - Consistent for most sampled populations since early 2010s
- Angler catch rates average, stable
- Environmental stressors a factor and increasing
 - Warming trends and volatility
 - Major ecosystem changes in recent decades
- Invasive species and disease concerns
- Research supports environmental drivers
 - Further research needed to focus.....
 - Study data pending
- Stakeholder concerns remain (increasing?)

Proposed Rule Change

Extend catch and release season for Wisconsin waters of Green Bay and northern Lake Michigan until July 1 (beginning early March)

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"WILD WISCONSIN:
OFF THE RECORD"

Meeting Agenda

1) DNR Staff Presentations

- Introduction by Nick Legler
- Surveys/studies, factors impacting bass populations, potential or proposed regulation by Fisheries Biologist Scott Hansen

2) Public and/or Angler Feedback

- Questions relevant to Scott's presentation & initial feedback
- Formal feedback questionnaire (7:30 PM or earlier ?)
- Continued open comments, feedback & discussion
- Also, public comment period via email to DNRLAKEMICHIGANPLAN@wisconsin.gov through Sun Nov 17

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Poll Question #1 (*angler satisfaction*)

- 1) How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the current smallmouth bass fishery in Green Bay?
 - a) very satisfied
 - b) satisfied
 - c) neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
 - d) dissatisfied
 - e) very dissatisfied

(select 1 answer; any clarification?)

Poll Question #2 (*locations fished*)

- 2) What location(s) do you primarily fish on Green Bay and/or Lake Michigan (select all that apply)?
- a) Fox River and lower bay
 - b) West shore and its tributaries (Peshtigo, Oconto, Menominee, others)
 - c) Door County waters of Green Bay (Little Sturgeon to Gills Rock)
 - d) Lake Michigan (Rowley's Bay, North Bay, Washington Island, etc.)

(select all that apply; primarily 1, primarily 2, etc.)

Poll Question #3 (*fishing activities*)

- 3) Which best describes your fishing activities on Green Bay (select all that apply)?
- a) recreational fishing
 - b) I am a fishing guide on Green Bay
 - c) tournament fishing (including pre-fishing/scouting)
 - d) I don't fish on Green Bay

(select all that apply)

Poll Question #4 (*factors impacting bass*)

- 4) What factors do you think have the greatest impact on the quality of smallmouth bass fishing on Green Bay (select your top 3):
- a) early season fishing pressure
 - b) over harvest
 - c) size and bag limits are too liberal
 - d) tournament fishing
 - e) cormorant predation
 - f) ecological changes (e.g., plants, algae, sediments, water level, climate etc.)
 - g) nearshore changes (e.g., shoreline development, rip-rap, dredging, etc.)
 - h) invasive species (e.g., round goby, mussels)
 - i) I see no issues
- (*select your top 3*)

Poll Question #5 (*proposed regulation change*)

5) Do you favor extending the catch-and-release season until July 1 for smallmouth and largemouth bass across Green Bay and Northern Lake Michigan?

- a) yes
- b) no
- c) undecided

*In MS-Teams, we'll follow up with a poll via email.
Please provide your email in the chat or request a poll
via email to DNRLAKEMICHIGANPLAN@wisconsin.gov*

*(select 1 answer; **distribute paper poll now...**)*

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Thank you all for attending!

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