

APPENDIX D: MDNR HARBOR ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

MDNR Fisheries Division Response

February 22, 2007

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Sent: Thursday, February 22, 2007 11:56 AM
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cc: Bernie Fekete; Kirk Harrier
Subject: Kalamazoo Harbor Master Plan

MDNR Fisheries Division comments on the Kalamazoo Harbor Master Plan

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the draft Harbor Plan. Fisheries Division supports the development of a master plan and recommends the surrounding communities adopt the plan in its final form to direct future harbor development.

As stated at the workshops held on December 14, 2006 and January 23, 2007 Fisheries Division does not support extensive dredging of the shallow water habitats in Kalamazoo and Douglas Lakes. These shallow water habitats are the most biologically productive areas in the lakes and provide critical habitat for a variety of species including the State threatened lake sturgeon. With the exception of maintenance dredging of the current facilities, future marina development and dredging activities should be limited downstream of the Blue Star Highway bridge. We recommend the Harbor Master Plan focus on a scaled down version of Alternative Two. The plan should identify and prioritize locations suitable for future marina expansion, concentrating on areas will require the least amount of maintenance dredging. This approach will allow for the targeting of scarce revenues and planned marina expansion as demand increases. To prevent future conflicts, the plan should note that not all areas of the lakes are suited for navigation of large craft or future marina development.

Please note other Divisions within the Department of Natural Resources may have comments or concerns regarding the proposed plans.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

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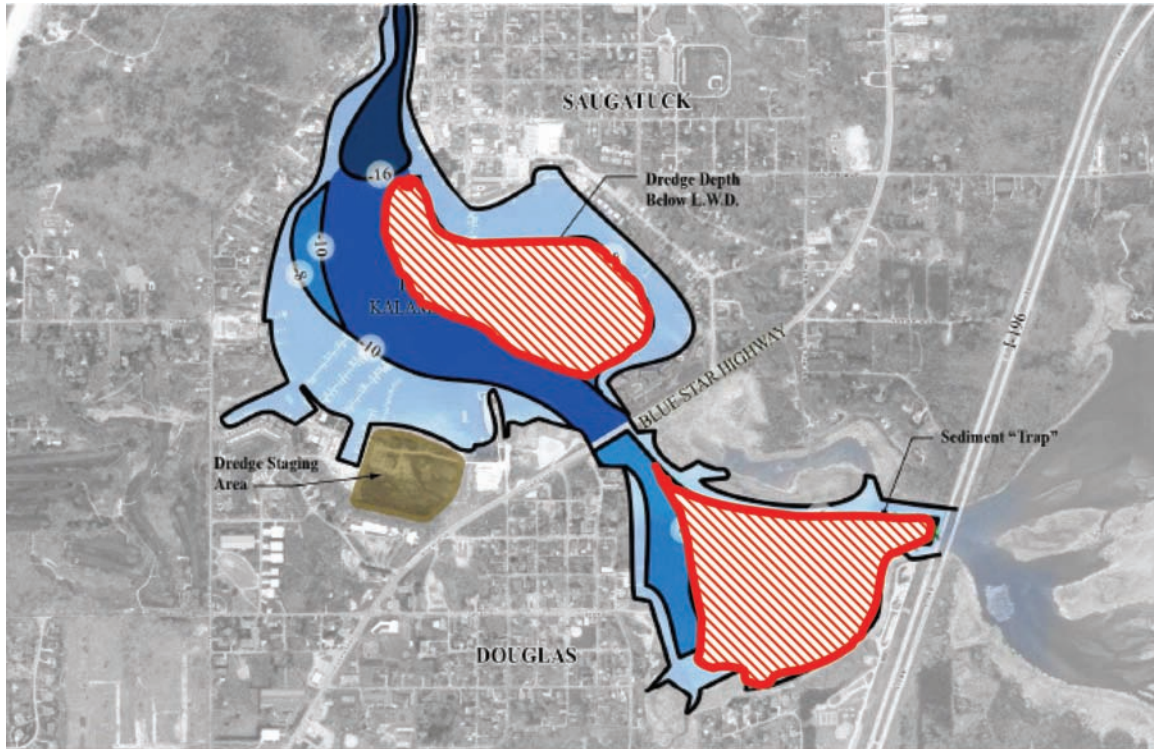
Harbor Environmental Concerns

Lake Sturgeon

Lake sturgeon is a migratory fish species found in many large rivers and lakes in North America with Michigan in the center of its historic range. Lake Michigan populations have historically spawned in the Kalamazoo River and along shorelines near Ganges, Pier Cove and Saugatuck in Allegan County. Populations in and around Michigan were estimated to number in the hundreds of thousands. Since the mid-nineteenth century, exploitation and habitat degradation have resulted in a substantial decline. Today, these populations are believed to be at 1% of their former size. The most significant occurrences for this species in the United States are currently in Michigan and Wisconsin. In response to a continuous period of low abundance, Michigan Department of Natural Resources listed this species as threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

This is the only sturgeon species native to the Great Lakes basin. The distinct shape of these fish and comparatively large size of adult lake sturgeon makes them hard to confuse with other Great Lakes fish species. Lake sturgeon are generally bottom dwelling and occur in large rivers and shallow areas of large lakes where small benthic organisms that serve as food are abundant. While adult sturgeon are most often associated with deep run and pool habitats of rivers, juvenile sturgeon prefer shallow areas where they feed on small benthic organisms, such as crustaceans, and aquatic insect larvae.

Protection of shallow water habitats in the Kalamazoo harbor is critical to the continued survival of the Kalamazoo River population of lake sturgeon. The Harbor Master Plan must ensure that future development options are compatible with this species habitat needs. Therefore, critical shallow water habitats in Lake Kalamazoo and Douglas Harbor will be identified as environmental preservation areas where no dredging would be allowed. In addition, because lake sturgeon are more active in the harbor during certain time periods, unconfined dredging would not be allowed during April 15 through July 15 and September 1 through November 1.



Areas within the red lines would be closed to all dredging. Areas outside of the red lines could be dredged to depths indicated in current plan. Dredging should not occur during April 15-July 15 and September 1-November 1.