

STEELHEAD NEWS

A Publication of the Lake Superior Steelhead Association

www.steelheaders.org

Oct / Nov 2016: Issue 391



Brule River Steelhead



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Lake Superior Steelhead Association

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LSSA's Mission:

For these reasons and more, the Lake Superior Steelhead Association exists: to protect our rivers and fish; to help preserve Lake Superior and its bounty; to learn more about the resources we enjoy and foster discussion, research and sound fisheries management practices; to educate anglers and the public about all these things. The LSSA has taken all these tasks upon its shoulders. These issues are too important to leave to chance or the vagaries of bureaucracies and politics. Our mission is to protect and improve the cold water fishery of the Lake Superior region and to bring various groups of anglers together in an atmosphere of friendship, so they can work for their and the resources common good.

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MN DNR Goal to Harvest Steelhead

“The goal all along has been to rehabilitate steelhead populations to a point where limited harvest can occur,” said Cory Goldsworthy, DNR Lake Superior Fisheries Supervisor in an article in the June 10 issue of *Outdoor News*. The article focused primarily on Kamloops trout. “That’s always been our goal and still is our goal today. Until that point, we are using the Kamloops strain as the harvestable rainbow trout.”
Source: Outdoor News

MI DNR to Re-introduce Grayling

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources has announced a proposed initiative that aims to bring back an extirpated species to the state – Arctic grayling.

The proposed initiative, announced at the Natural Resources Commission meeting in June, 2016, will seek to establish self-sustaining populations of Arctic grayling throughout its historical range. The initiative is a proposed objective in the MI DNR’s 2017 Inland Trout Management Plan, which currently is being drafted. The Arctic grayling is a native and iconic fish species in Michigan. Slate blue in color, they have a sail-like dorsal fin and were virtually the only native stream salmonid in the Lower Peninsula. In the lower 48 states they are native only to Michigan and Montana, further cementing their legendary status.

Michigan’s native grayling population died off nearly a century ago due to statewide logging efforts of the 1800s, over-fishing and general habitat destruction

Although gone for an extensive period of time, reintroduction efforts have occurred with the most recent one coming 30 years ago. While unsuccessful at that time, lessons were learned and significant strides have

been made to establish a better strategy to move this initiative forward.

The Manistee River watershed, once known as a premier grayling river, will be the first targeted location for reintroduction.

The MI DNR will work closely with partners as the proposed Arctic grayling initiative moves forward. The Little River Band, located in Manistee County, has for several years been engaged in extensive research for potential grayling reintroduction. “This is going to be ‘Michigan’s Arctic Grayling Initiative,’” said Dexter. “Collaboration and partnerships will be crucial to its success.” This effort also will lean heavily on recent scientific research in Michigan, as well as the successes Montana has achieved in re-establishing stable Arctic grayling populations. *Source: MI DNR*

BRSC Angling Etiquette Guidelines

The Brule River Sportsman’s Club recently updated their angler etiquette guidelines which are posted on kiosk’s on the Brule River and were featured in their September newsletter. They are worth repeating here, although the situation on MN’s north shore might be different.

- Give other anglers their space. Never enter a hole or run being fished without asking permission. There is a lot of water to fish.
- It is unethical to intentionally disturb fishing on their spawning beds.
- Land your fish as quickly as possible and handle the fish you intend to release as little as you can. Wet your hands before handling your fish. Steelhead unhooked in knee-deep water may survive better than those unhooked at the bank.
- Respect the environment. Pack out what you pack in and pick up any litter you encounter, especially

discarded fishing line. Everyone has a little room in their fishing vest.

- Understand the trespass laws and respect the rights and wishes or property owners. Remember we are guests when on private property.
- Be aware that the state forest allows warming fires along the river, but they must be attended to and fully extinguished prior to leaving. Never build a fire on private land without the landowner's permission. *Source:*

BRSC Sept Newsletter

Upcoming Events

Great Waters Fly Fishing Expo
March 17, 18, 19, 2017

Sponsored by MN Trout Unlimited
Hamline University, St. Paul, MN

LSSA Youth Mentoring Classroom
Sessions

March 11, 18, 2017
Hartley Nature Center, Duluth, MN

LSSA Spring Banquet
April 22, 2017

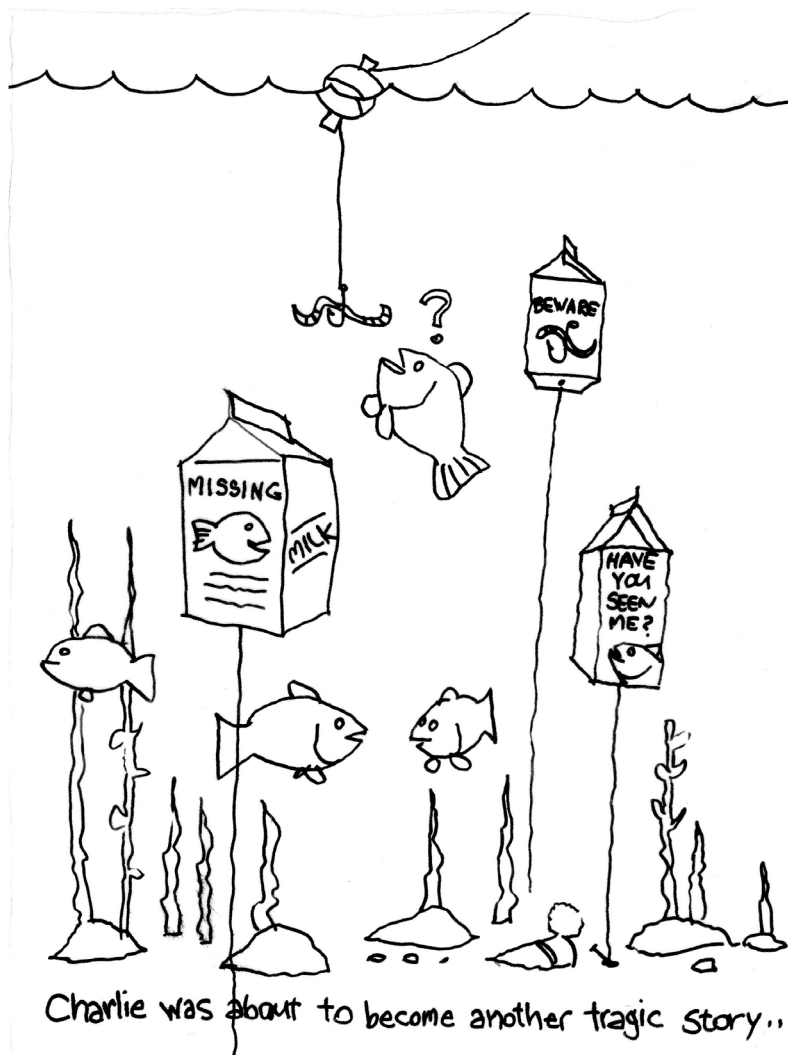
From the Editor

The article this summer in Outdoor News about the Kamloops program and the relationship of it to the catch release regulation for steelhead in Minnesota made me think, which is why I've included the salient quotes in News and Notes. I've always understood that the kamloops program was established in part to create a put and take fishery in order to obtain buy-in from those who wished to harvest a fish once the steelhead fishery went to catch and release. But I did not realize that the goal of the steelhead fishery rehabilitation was to again return to a limited harvest for steelhead.

Steelhead numbers seem to be improving. Catch rates bounce from year to year but the trend has been upward. This isn't necessarily due to increased abundance, because catch and release is allowing fish to be caught more than once, in many cases many times. The only accurate measurement that exists are the returns to the traps at the Knife and French rivers. The 2015 spring and fall run on the Knife was the best since the trap became operational, but due to weak 2011 and 2012 year classes, this trend may not continue. Certainly the run in the Knife is not yet reaching its full potential

So what about a limited harvest? The key word is "limited." Following the example of WI on the Brule, will this be a minimum size limit that protects maiden spawners? But the bigger question in my mind is why a harvest at all? Does the end goal of sport fishing have to result in killing of those very steelhead that have successfully survived all the rigors of survival and returned to spawn? MN steelhead anglers have already accepted a catch and release ethic for our trophy fishery. Why change?

Thanks to all of you who sent me photos for this issue. Please consider contributing an article or anything else Considering volunteering as a mentor in our youth mentoring program. E-mail me with articles and photos at scott@scottthorpeflyfishing.com or text at 612-669-9601.



Fishing Funny

By David Thorpe

Rehabilitation Begins

By Kevin J. Bovee

The Lake Superior Steelhead Association (LSSA) has begun the construction portion of its second Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC) grant. It's been a long time coming but by the time you read this piece, the in stream work should be completed. A very brief update is in order here.

As many know, the LSSA received its first LSOHC grant back in 2012. That was Phase I of our Knife River Habitat Rehabilitation work. Then in 2014 the LSSA received funding for Phase II of the work. It's under Phase II that the construction project is being implemented and funded.

During the assessment of the entire Knife River system, the LSSA acquired critical information pertaining to the spawning areas used by adult steelhead annually, areas where holding habitat



Above, work area prior to start, looking down river.

Below, moving the channel away from work bank.





Above, excavating the work area.

for young of the year and one plus steelhead were lacking and sites where slumping clay banks were contributing to the sediment load being transported by the river in rain/high water events. Over the fall and winter of 2015/16, all this information was integrated and prioritized. The section of stream that we refer to as the Reach 9/12 project was selected because it is the first major upstream slumping bank above Lake County #11 (Valley Road), is located within our cold water rearing area and is within the primary spawning area in the Knife River watershed. Due to these factors, Reach 9/12 became our highest rehabilitation priority.

The MN DNR has required in recent years that river rehabilitation projects be engineered/constructed using the Natural Channel Design (NCD) parameters. NCD is a method of restoring a stream by engineering

changes to mimic natural conditions. The engineering might include reestablishing meanders, planting trees in the riparian corridor, replacing woody debris in the stream for habitat (root wads) and reconnecting the channel to the floodplain. Extensive training is required to get the proper credentials to design projects using NCD criteria.

To restore the stream using NCD methodology, pre-construction elevation surveying data must be collected. This data is necessary to depict the current streambed cross-sections and stream bank heights. These initial survey elevations are then used to create the proposed post construction stream bank elevations and streambed cross-sections. This data was gathered up to freeze up last winter and then again in the spring of 2016 as the conditions allowed.

Over the winter engineering plans were developed for this 2000+-foot stretch of the main Knife River using the NCD protocol. Sedimentation is a major factor in the listing of the Knife River on the state's impaired waterways. Our work will eliminate approximately 105 tons of sedimentation annually deposited in the river from this one bank. The NCD analysis is where this figure was arrived at.

The photos that accompany this article tell the story of the project better than any brief narrative can. There will be a much more in depth article on the project in the 2017 *Lake Superior Angler* which will explain the whys and wherefores of the LSSA's NCD project currently underway in the watershed. Look for the magazine next March or so.





Above, placing root wads in work area.

Below, root wads covered with fill, seeded and matted.





Above, bank nearing completion, looking up river.

Below, the reach is completed and plantings sprouted, looking down river. All photos by Kevin J. Bovee.

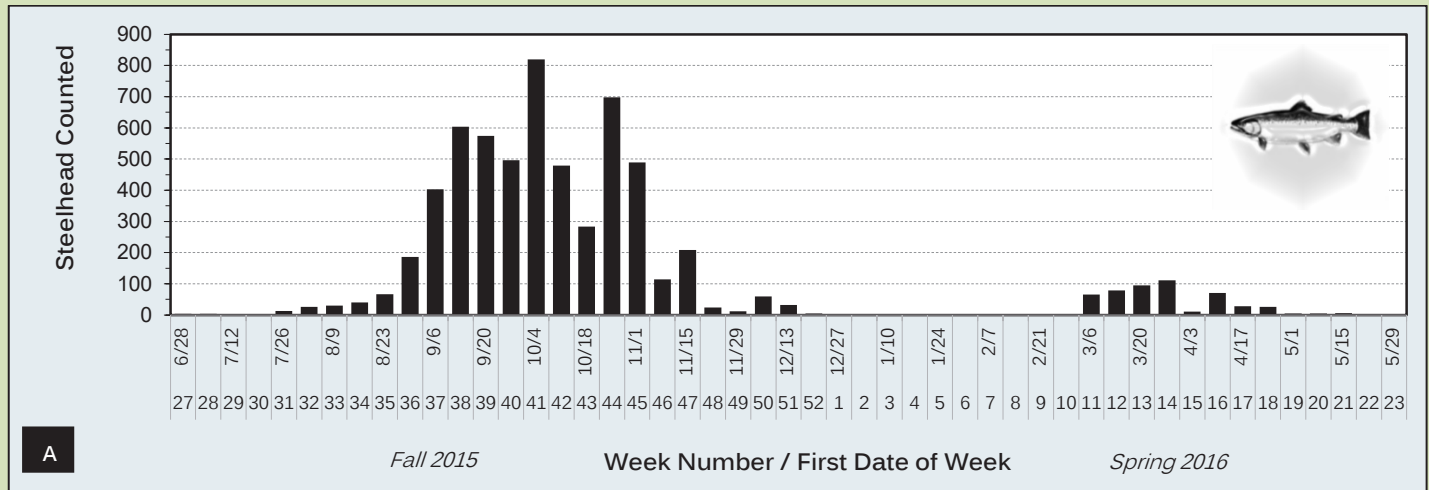


2015 - 2016 BRULE RIVER STEELHEAD RUN

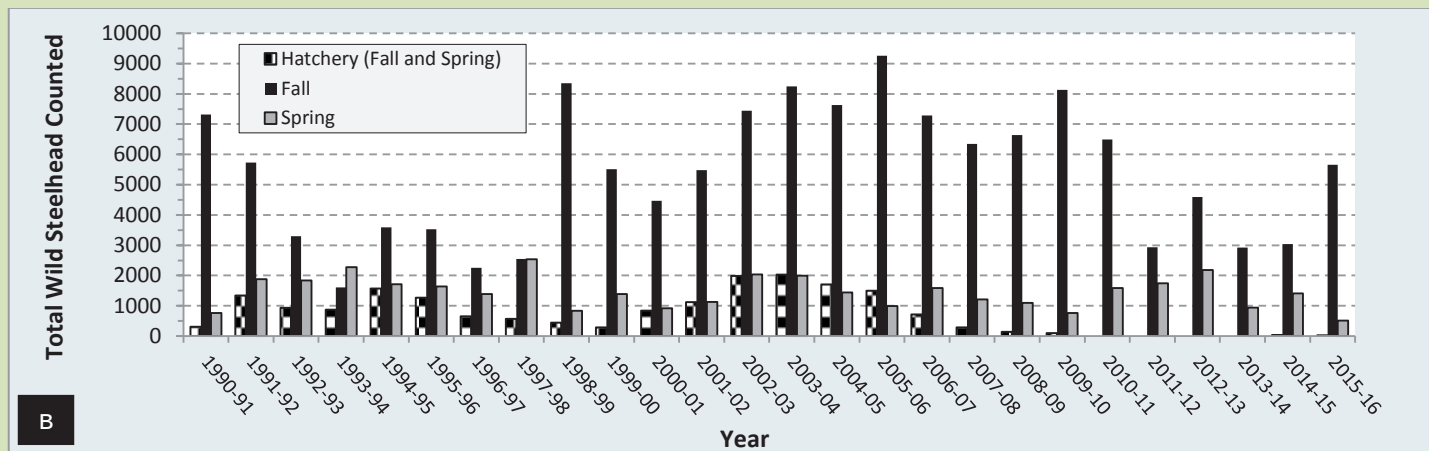
Fall 2015 Count	Spring 2016 Count*	Total Wild Steelhead Run Count
5,660	507	6,167

* Excludes 18 fin-clipped rainbow trout, likely from Minnesota DNR north shore streams stocking program

The Steelhead run was monitored with digital video equipment during fall 2015 and spring 2016. Chart A shows run the timing or “periodicity,” with most Steelhead arriving during the fall. The fall peak occurred during the second week of October (week 41) and the spring peak was in late-March (week 14). A few warm days in the spring coincided with the spring peak, yet consistently low water temperatures were common in the lower river during March and early-April. In general, Brule area weather is more consistent in fall than in spring, and fall migration timing responds with more year-to-year consistency. In contrast, the spring migration timing is more variable relative to spring weather patterns, particularly as they influence water temperature and the timing of ice-out.



This year’s 6,167 Steelhead are included in Chart B, along with the annual total Steelhead counts since video monitoring began in 1990. Five and six-year-old fish were common, and they ranged from 21 to 29 inches long. Nearly 62% of the run was 20 to 25 inches long and weighed from three to five pounds. Twenty-five percent of the run equaled or exceeded the minimum legal length limit of 26 inches, with weights from six to 10 pounds. The early-maturing (three-year-old) Steelhead or “jacks” comprised nine percent of the run, which is typical for the river.





Above, Scott Thorpe with fall 2016 Brule steelhead.



Above, Tom Hrabik with spring 2016 steelhead. Below, Jeff Donegan with spring 2016 steelhead.



Above, Brad Widstrom with a sea-run brown from Argentina. Below, Brad with an Argentine rainbow.



LSSA BOD/Membership Meeting
June 8, 2016 MINUTES

BOD Present: C. Wilson, J., Somrock, D. Dahl, M. Pitan, C. Wistrom and K. Bovee.

1. Gambling Report: All required forms were presented for review, discussion and approval. Motion by Dahl to accept the gambling report as presented. Motion seconded by Pitan and motion passed.

2. Treasurer’s Report: Dahl presented the report in person. Treasury in good shape. Dahl/Bovee to work out all reimbursements by the June 30 for the state’s fiscal year end.

3. Relocation Update: Refined the spots according to DNR wishes. Several road accesses on the Main West Branch and will have one stocking up on the Old Drummond Grade/Main Stem of Knife River. Field permit to transport fish required and Wilson to work on that.

4. Grant Update: Bovee presented report on Phases I and II. Also stated that LSSA applied for the next LSOHC request. It was submitted at 11 am on May 26 and accepted. Committee will get the various requests the end of June. VIDEO-Wilson showed the board the video that has been prepared. Board very excited. Video (or segments of it) will be placed on our website and Face book account. Cost of the production and copying of 40 videos was \$ 10285.46. Board decided to have the LSSA general fund/gambling account pay this cost. Motion by Somrock to have LSSA pick up the cost of video production. Motion seconded by Dahl and motion passed. Wilson abstained from vote. Video is approx. eight minutes in length.

5. Face Book Update: Sandstrom trying to contact S.Kuiti. Wistrom to stop in and chat with S.Kuiti to see if we can make some progress.

6. Summer Project: River Clean Up, Planking Party and Spey Day on the Brule. Just don’t pick the Tall Ships Weekend for any projects.

7. Newsletter Update: Last one for the summer will be out shortly. Editor Thorpe leaving for AK and his summer of guiding any day now.

8. Old/New/Other: The D. Zentner group was discussed. Working on river master plan proposal.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kevin J. Bovee, Secretary



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The LSSA continues to build its base of friends and fans on Facebook. As of January 2016, we have 516 followers. Please check out our online presence and keep in touch. www.facebook.com/.../Lake-Superior-Steelhead-Association

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