



APRIL 2025 ANNUAL CONFERENCE & FALL 2024 MINI-MEETING

From the Helm . . .



Captain Bill Winowiecki
President
Michigan Charter Boat
Association

As we come to the end of another Charter fishing season, I wish to reflect on how much Lake Michigan and MCBA have changed in recent years. In 2012 it was believed that Lake Michigan had too many Salmon and plants were cut. By 2016 Salmon numbers were down and catches were smaller for the next several years. Eventually, more fish were planted. Now in 2024 Salmon numbers are up substantially and there are reports of great Salmon fishing up the whole coast of Lake Michigan. There seem to be lots of young fish, also, which suggests good fishing for the next season and more.

Unfortunately, the Lake Trout catch numbers are down, and it seems to be harder to find good schools of trout. It's quite amazing how the lake's fishery can change so much in only a few short years.

There have been other major changes in our fishery as well. We have a new Tribal Decree in place, for which there is an appeal ongoing. So far, we really have not seen much in the way of changes except that Charter Boat reporting every two weeks is mandatory now. This new requirement has generated much grumbling from many

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Captains, including myself. However, our member Captains are reporting on time, and that is a huge credit to the integrity of our membership.

The 6th Circuit Court has not had a hearing or made a ruling on the appeal and the Sault Tribe has not signed on to the new decree. Only time will tell, but the MCBA and the CPMR will stay on top of it. For now, we can only say so far, so good.

In my own local area, Glen Arbor, a State Licensed Commercial fisher placed two trap nets about one hundred yards offshore from the dock in early May, and they are still there in mid-September. Because of their location, they are capturing many salmon that would normally migrate into the Crystal River, sadly

many of these salmon are thrashing around and dying in the nets. These dead salmon have to be discarded when the traps are tended. The nets have created a difficult and dangerous problem for small fishing boats and the many boaters who use the near shore lake area for water skiing and pleasure boating. It's difficult to dodge the net flags and buoys so close to a popular boating area. It is sad that there is not a better level of cooperation between commercial fishers and recreational fishing and boating in this location.

The MCBA is going through change as well, as we have some new blood stepping up into Board positions and take on some new responsibilities that will strengthen and broaden the reach of the MCBA I am excited to see where MCBA goes in the coming years. Due to many recent changes at the board level of the MCBA, the decision has been made to make a major "Change of Station" regarding the fall conference. Because of these recent changes, and when they occurred there was not enough time remaining to carefully prepare for a successful fall conference, so the Board decided to move the traditional fall Conference to the spring. The board had been exploring the idea of a spring conference for some time to possibly have a more useful conference. The time seemed right and the change has been made.

The new spring conference will be held at the Great Wolf Lodge in Traverse City on Saturday, April 5th, 2025. This will be the traditional full day conference with all the important guest speakers we always look forward to seeing and hearing. We believe it will be a great way to be informed at the beginning of the season.

The MCBA by-laws require that a meeting must be held in the 4th quarter of the year for the purposes of informing the membership and holding the election of the officers for the following year. So, in accordance with the by-

laws, we will be holding a general membership meeting and mini-conference in Clare at the Doherty Hotel on October 19th at 10:00 AM. All members are invited and encouraged to attend. There will be updates on the many changes coming to the MCBA and there will be an election of new board members, including all the officers and the directors whose terms have expired. We are reminded that all members of the board are volunteers and serve without pay.

Other changes came to the MCBA during the summer and there are more coming. Our longtime treasurer, Larry Lienczewski, stepped aside and is focusing his efforts on the MCBA drug program. Vice President Karl Burnside has taken his place temporarily until a new treasurer can be elected at the fall meeting. Our longtime website advisor, Maxine Appleby, parted ways after many years of service. I want to thank both Maxine and Larry for all that they have contributed to the MCBA over their decades of dedicated service in those roles.

Our website, our Facebook page, and our newsletter are all now in the process of being updated. We are looking forward to the changes and new ideas. We've worked hard not to make any changes to these major matters until after fishing season has been mostly completed because everyone was busy fishing; and our summers have been consumed by our own businesses. Now that things are slowing down, we can move forward. As noted, all members of the board are volunteers and serve without pay, and it's been challenging to find the time to manage all the issues that have cropped up this summer. There have been several changes to the board over the past two or three years, and these new members have brought many new ideas and visions of how to serve our members and promote Charter fishing in our great state even more effectively into the future.

Finally, I am announcing that I will be stepping down from my role as President in October. After five years at the helm, it's time for a new Captain to take the wheel and navigate the MCBA into the future. It's been a great and interesting five years. We've worked hard to handle some huge challenges. We didn't win them all, but we gave it our all, and did the best we could. I'd like to think we made a positive difference.

While I am stepping down, I implore every member to attend the meeting in Clare, to be involved and support the MCBA as a whole. We are only as strong as our membership, and we need our membership to change as well, by being more involved, better informed, and to help make MCBA be a strong voice and partner with the MDNR. It starts with your support and involvement in this great organization that I am proud to be a member of.

Captain Bill Winowiecki
President
Michigan Charter Boat Association

Vice President/Treasurer: Karl Burnside

As I look at the clock in my car, it is 3.54 AM. I have been on the road 40 minutes for my "day job". This is a typical start time for me. One thing for certain, it gives me a lot of time to think as the miles click away.

Today I am reflecting on closing out another charter season on Saginaw Bay. I had to chase the fish a bit more this year due to constant wind and water temperature fluctuations. Fishing and reservations were consistent, and I met some fantastic people along the way too, making it a great season.

In talking with many of you over the summer, it sounds like there was outstanding

fishing across the state which is great to hear. As you have probably just finished reading Bill's article, this year marks the beginning of many changes in the MCBA.

Bill will be stepping down as president later this fall. I want to thank Bill for his leadership and dedication to the MCBA and the many issues we have faced during his 5 years as our president. In particular, the dedication and hard work on the Tribal Consent Decree certainly comes to mind. It was a monumental task, and I for one, greatly appreciate his efforts navigating the MCBA through it.

One thing is for certain, we face different times and different challenges than we did 52 years ago when the MCBA was founded. What worked in the past, may not necessarily work in the future. The MCBA board recognizes this. They are working hard to ensure our next 50 years will be just as bright as the past 50. The board is dedicated to maintaining the MCBA as the standard of excellence in our industry, with continued advocacy and education of our fishery.

The MCBA must support the MDNR, but we also challenge them. The MCBA needs to make sure that we have a presence in Lansing so we can have a loud voice when it comes to issues that affect us all. Being initiative-taking is always better than being reactive, and this is accomplished by making sure we are out in front of issues. This is most certainly an area our board is working on and will look to our membership for input and direction.

The board is centering their focus on you, the membership. They want you to be enthusiastic about being an MCBA member. Yes, it is true we have a great drug program, but we do not want that to be the main reason Captains and Mates join the MCBA. This is why the board chose to move the annual meeting to the spring of 2025. It was more important to immediately start work on these

improvements so the membership could benefit sooner, rather than later. There will be more information on this and the annual meeting as we head into the new year.

As we move forward with changing the MCBA for the future, that future is you. We need to hear from you with your thoughts and comments. We need you to participate. It does not take much. Give your director a call or a quick email, and you can always reach out to Bill or myself as well.

I wish you all a safe and enjoyable conclusion to the 2024 charter fishing season!

Karl Burnside
Vice President/Treasurer
MCBA



SECRETARY'S REPORT By Captain John Giszczak

I pray everyone had a successful and safe season. The MCBA is evolving and moving into a new chapter. The association is now over fifty years old serving the fishing community, protecting charter businesses, advocating for our rights, while also seeking to safeguard our fishing resources. The MCBA started with a couple of captains sitting around a fire, wanting to do something to help captains on the tumultuous journey of operating on the Great Lakes, while also wanting to help to protect the resource. The MCBA has been doing the job successfully ever since. We have fought for your rights from day one. Many on the board have spent countless hours attending meetings representing and promoting your business with zero compensation. Some believe we are just a vehicle for drug testing, however, actually, this is an added, optional benefit, available to you as a member of the MCBA. In addition to all of the individual benefits of your membership, the MCBA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit association. As a non-profit, in addition to operating the association for the benefit of our members, we support important scholarship programs in fisheries biology programs at Michigan State University and Lake Superior State University. We also promote goodwill within the communities where our members operate. Due to updates within the association and a nearly whole new board of directors we are moving forward. These changes may delay the mailing of the membership application for the 2025 season. I encourage you to apply online for much faster membership processing. We are looking at creating an online captain's account where you will be able create a profile, and make your own updates to your online listing. This will make renewals much faster in the future. We are still looking for an energetic Director for the Lake Erie/Lake St. Clair region. If you are interested and would like to volunteer for the position, no worries, I will guide you through the process and help you on your journey to becoming a valued member of the Team. It's personally rewarding work that allows you to bring your area's issues and perspectives to the attention of the Association. Have a safe winter and please call me with any questions concerning your 2025 membership. Captain John: 734-787-003

DIRECTORS' PORT REPORTS

NORTHERN LAKE MICHIGAN

By Captain Bruce Shane
MCBA Director



Salmon everywhere! The salmon fishery yielded some excellent catches for 2024 off Frankfort and it seems other ports both north and south seemed to



show similar great results.

This year May started hot for all age classes of fish, then mostly smaller fish were caught in June with Lake Trout in the mix. Once the calendar hit late July it was game on for mature salmon but the smaller salmon remained in the mix. By mid-August Coho were also plentiful. It was common to bring in a box of mature Kings mixed with coho, steelhead, and smaller Kings of all age classes. Scum lines even appeared offshore in mid to late August which were fished mid-morning with good results.

I would suggest, from my experience and talking to other captains around Frankfort, that this was the best fishing since 2012. Fish were healthy and well fed with stomachs full of Alewives

Captain John Milbourne of Michigan Sport Fishing Company, LLC who runs the boat Tuna Time is our Port Captain for Manistee. Captain John also reported that Fishing in Manistee was quite exceptional all season long. It started with a herd of kings in early May that for the most part stuck around all summer. He also reported some exciting offshore steelhead and coho fishing mid-summer that resulted in limit catches in more than a regular basis.



The one soft spot was the lake trout fishing according to Captain John, which seemed "off" from recent years. The annual Chinook run is in progress and every time he thought it was over another batch shows up, hopefully the warm river temps don't hurt the survival rate for this fall spawning cycle.

On the business side of things trips were strong for most boats with most Manistee Captains pleased with the outcome of the 2024 season.

The Benzie Frenzy Salmon Tournament took place August 23-25 2024 with 82 boats participating (19 Pros, 63 amateurs) in the main tournament, congratulations to all who participated. Weather was ideal for and looking at the results almost all of the teams both days weighed in their tournament limit of 5 fish for amateurs and 10 fish for the pros. For more information on the results of that great tournament see...

<https://www.facebook.com/FishBenzie/>
or
<http://www.tournamenttrail.net/>

Stocking this Spring in Benzie county included nearly 800,000 Coho Salmon while Manistee county received 275,000 King Salmon. Other species stocking information in Northern Michigan and the whole state can be found at <https://www.dnr.state.mi.us/fishstock/>.

The Platte River mouth access has been difficult for boats this summer especially V hulled boats in the 18 ft and up size as no dredging is allowed on Sleeping Bear Lakeshore Land. The DNR has proposed a possible long term dredging solution to the Sleeping Bear National Lakeshore but no action has been taken thus far.

A boat capsized a couple of miles from Frankfort harbor this August one person was rescued by a nearby boater but unfortunately one person drowned. The Frankfort Coast Guard station has not been manned at all in 2024 so the nearest station for the Coast Guard is nearly 30 miles away in Manistee. Evidently, this is the first time in 100 years that the station has not been manned,

according to the Coast Guard this is due to staff shortages and the plan is not to close the station but leave it unmanned until more recruits are available.

Be sure to mark your calendars for Saturday April 5th 2025 where the Michigan Charter Boat Association Conference will take place at Great Wolf Lodge in Traverse City. I've attended the last 2 conferences and they have been very worthwhile and informative with a full agenda that included personnel from Sea Grant, DNR Fisheries, and many other speakers and participants. Your participation in the conference helps strengthen our status as an organization and helps our fishery.

Finally, this report is to meant to cover updates on Lake Michigan from Manistee to the bridge so anyone that would like to volunteer as a port captain please contact me at rigandrollcharters@gmail.com or 419-356-4317. Have a great fall!

By Captain Bruce Shane
MCBA Director

CENTRAL LAKE MICHIGAN

by Captain Mark Williams
MCBA Director



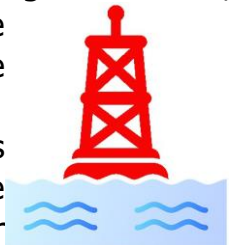
As I am authoring this article there is a small craft advisory for the next three days, as a cold front pushes its way through Ludington.

This is a significant statement as the weather as well as the fishing was unbelievably great! In fact, I only had three blow days in July and August! Everyone was enjoying this with limit catches being brought in by our fleet and our weekend warriors!

There were four main things that I

observed this season regarding our catch, which I will assume can be contributed to the stable weather we experienced.

First, we had a tremendous number of kings caught in the 20-to-24-pound range. Our personal biggest was just shy of twenty-nine pounds, but the biggest one weighed in Ludington, was during our July Offshore at just over thirty-four pounds by member Captain Micah Schmidt of Hiatus Charters. There were others that topped the scale over thirty, but none over thirty-six, which was surprising to me as the spring size was extremely healthy.



Second, was the number of beautiful coho

that stuck around from late June through the writing of this article. It was nice to work the King water in the early morning and then slide out to deeper water and finish out your trip with nice Coho. Of course, this allowed for the Steelhead to be caught and they did not disappoint, with an average size being in that 6-to-8-pound range, and several over 10 to 12. An extremely healthy sign for our fishery.

Third, was the aggressive bite that occurred in August. I would actually say it was unbelievable as we had a two plus week stretch of catching twenty fish by 8 am! I know in my marina alone; charters were done and clients gone by 9 am on several occasions. It seemed that the only thing that would cause a trip to run full time was having six clients on board. We had several fish hit when setting lines, more than I can recall, but the most memorable one was when we were

SOUTHERN LAKE MICHIGAN

Captain Holly Engel
MCBA Director

This summer was unique as it is the first time in ten years I stepped back from the helm and back deck to focus on our growing family.



I write this as Hunter and I are expecting our son within 45 days, we are beyond excited to meet him and watch him grow up into a future outdoorsman!

Our May fishery in Saugatuck was wonderful with an excellent mix of Kings, Coho, Lake Trout and Steelhead.

untangling two coppers. I had removed the spoon on one, closed the swivel and was feeding it out of the way. Once the tangle was removed, I started winding it back in. It was about fifteen feet behind the boat when a Coho hit the swivel and began its' famous roll up in the line. My Mate Bo and I were shocked as this fish twisted up into the line! As we reached for the net, it reversed its roll and spun out of the line! I wish I had left the swivel open!

Finally, the interesting part of all of this was the amount of bait seen, numerous mornings when running out, we would see bait in the prop wash, and although we did see a lot of large alewives in our catch, we also saw the young ones as well. Hopefully, this is a good sign of bigger fish to come for next year. We know it will be hard to top this year.

By Captain Mark Williams
MCBA Director

As we pushed into June, the Lake Trout were more prevalent in the catch boxes which is normal for our fishery and warmer weathered patterns.

In July, we saw a lot more King's, Coho and Steelhead than Lake Trout which normally does not occur until early August.

In August, we experienced a great mature king run and as we pushed into September, the Best Chances boats slowed down as we work to transition into hunting season. It seems lake-wide and with most things outside, things transitioned earlier this year than in years past. Overall, it was an excellent season aboard the Best Chance boats out of Saugatuck and most ports nearing us reported the same season. We hope that you all wrap up your season safe and enjoy the winter months gearing back up for a successful spring season!

Speaking of transitioning into the fall,

winter and spring, be sure to mark your calendars for Saturday April 5th 2025 where the Michigan Charter Boat Association Conference will take place at Great Wolf Lodge in Traverse City. This will be our first spring conference in many years and, as I type this, I must say I am excited to see the Captains and First Mates attend that could not in years prior due to Hunting season. With the spring conference, we will have the newest information from the DNR and your basin coordinators for the upcoming 2025 season, along with supporting sponsors and members.

As we lead into the next new year, the MCBA's board has worked to make changes

NORTHERN LAKE HURON

By Captain Jeff Panich
MCBA Director

What a season 2024 has been had on northern Lake Huron. Catch rates in almost every port this summer has witnessed both an increase in quantity and size of fish across the board.



An early warmup this spring pushed the water temps up quickly moving fish from their normal migration and depths to about a two-week expedited move. June temps then cooled down and water temps leveled off for the remainder of the season. A windier than normal June and August canceled more than a few trips on the big lake, but the days captains were able to get out made for some great fishing.

This year we've seen a marked increase in bait fish in Lake Huron with sticklebacks, perch, smelt and gobies being readily abundant in the stomachs of predator fish.

that will put our members the primary focal point and add value to your membership.

If you have suggestions on things you would like to be considered, please do not hesitate to let us know! Our goal is to navigate the MCBA into the future with clarity and work for you!

Cheers and wishing you the best wrap up to 2024!

By Captain Holly Engel
MCBA Director

Lake Huron didn't disappoint with her mixed bag fishery again this year. From riggers bouncing bottom for Lake Trout, to one color and flat lines for steelhead, fisherman literally don't know what rod to watch on the boat giving charter captains a varied cooler full of diversity for their customers.

Rogers City area produced a great number of kings throughout the fishing season. Presque Isle and Alpena continued to be great areas for captains to dial in the Atlantic bite. Harrisville through Tawas had consistent steelhead throughout the summer with Coho and Atlantics migrating in and out throughout the season. Lake Trout remained the staple for captains from the thumb to the bridge as the most consistent and readily caught species on the eastern side.

Rereading my report and I'm smiling. I can't believe another fishing season on the big water is coming to an end, it's truly amazing to watch how Lake Huron is turning into an epic world class mixed bag fishery. The next few years are looking very bright on the sunrise side.

By Captain Jeff Panich, MCBA Director

SOUTHERN LAKE HURON

By Captain Bill Dunk
MCBA Director



Many boaters, especially from the northern part of the state, are already putting their boats away for the season. That should not be the case for Southern Lake Huron anglers. While the warmer waters in August slowed things down a bit, the salmon fishing seems to be picking up as the temps drop. I have heard of many good catches, from local anglers, of silver fish with some boats getting two to three King Salmon per trip.

Over the last several years, there have been increasing numbers of Atlantic Salmon cruising around the shallows and harbors in the Thumb. It starts about now and goes all the way until ice shows up. Coho can also be caught up at the Tip area in the fall. As long as the fall winds allow, we still have some great fishing ahead of us.

When it is time to pull the vessels for the winter, the boating isn't over. This is a great time to go over some maintenance items that may have been overlooked during the season. The basics like oil changes should be done, but don't forget the transmission or lower unit fluids. Inspect the fluids for any contaminants or water, especially the inboard\outboards (I\O) and outboards. While inboard transmissions can get water in them through the oil cooler, the other two have gearboxes that are always in the water. I\Os need the coupler greased with spline grease. Skipping this step can lead to the steel shaft wearing out the aluminum coupler prematurely. The bellows are another item that cannot be ignored. These only have a 7-

9 yr lifespan and need to be replaced. If skipped, you may find your vessel and the bottom of the lake. It's also recommended to pull the lower unit to inspect and grease the U-joints and gimbal bearings. Finding these problems now gives you the entire winter to get the issues addressed.

Another all-too-common thing I see in my surveys, are dirty bilges. Having a clean bilge helps you monitor if a leak should appear. It may also help prevent a ticket from the Coast Guard for oil pollution if your bilge pump is dumping contaminated water in the lakes.

As you roll into winter, it might also be a great time to start planning for new electronics. The new technology for the marine world in the last few years is amazing. As you probably have already heard, the new Live Sonars are teaching us new ways to fish. It's almost like a video game on your sonar screen. Watching fish zoom into your downrigger spread is something to see.

Radars have also come along way with solid state systems that power up without a warm up time. One item that has become increasingly popular is Night Vision. The prices have come down and make it a very affordable, and usually a very simple install. This offers a great safety advantage for those that leave and/or return to port in the dark.

That's all I have for now. If I can help with any boating related questions, feel free to reach out. Don't put those boats away yet! You have a few more fish to catch before winter.

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UPPER PENINSULA

By Captain Jim LaBeske
MCBA Director

Greetings again from the Upper U.P. aka the
(Copper Country)

In the Spring 2024 Cannon Ball, I reported on the Buffalo Reef Task Force release of their draft alternative analysis for stamp sands disposal locations. In my ongoing info search, I came across this 11-minute video **a must watch**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VpcFiMx94Zk> Search Buffalo Reef for an endless amount of information.

EPA studies mining waste barrel cleanup in Upper Peninsula Lake

This MLive article outlines the Question:
LAKE LINDEN, MI — How do you pull 400 deteriorating metal drums of mining waste off the bottom of a deep inland lake? Read here:
<https://www.mlive.com/environment/2024/08/epa-studies-mining-waste-barrel-cleanup-in-upper-peninsula-lake.html>

How has the economy affected your business? 35% of trips were inland and 65% on Lake Superior. My revenue as of Sept 11th is down 19.7% compared to 2023. But if I add in the value of the 5 trips, I donated I am just a bit short. However, the number of trips that I turned away and or referred to other area Captains was down as well. It is an expensive trip to the Keweenaw by air or driving.



There is a lot of head scratching going on by fellow Captains as well as the recreational anglers. The Salmon were around in May into mid-June and unusually very large but, very few compared to last year. Steelhead and Browns (both German & Seeforellen) have also been scarce.

Seeforellen characteristics! Thanks Wisconsin!

One of the fastest and largest growing strains of brown trout. Known for late maturation. Known for having a long-life expectancy. They tend to wander and rarely stay where they are stocked.

Walleye have been playing Hide & Seek for most of the year! People asked where are they? Captain Ron Racine of Skinny-dipper Fishing did more Walleye trips than Trout/Salmon at about a 2 to 1 rate (I was just the opposite). He would have a good day and then a poor day.

Theories suggested from those fishing the

Portage/Torch Lakes ranged from 1) the warm water has them feeding at night to 2) the massive amount of bait in the system.

We hope for a few good catches of all species now thru October. Tight Lines for now and a 1 Foot Chop... Stay Safe!



By Captain Jim LaBeske
MCBA Director

MDNR CHARTER REPORTING UPDATE

By Kendra Kozlauskos

Hello Captains,

As the summer fishing season winds down, I hope everyone had a great charter season. I heard many reports of great fishing, with nice-sized salmon and trout caught. As we

approach fall and many of you are getting ready to switch gears either fishing inland, or entering your non-fishing season, I wanted to provide a few reminders.

If you are done fishing for an extended period, please remember that you can report non-fishing in advance in your FACTS reporting account. This can be done in "Future Reporting Status" which you will find under "Trips" if using a computer, and on the main page on Mobile. Anytime you login, you can report no fishing for any period in the next 12 months. Check off all periods you do not plan to charter and make sure to save and certify those reports at the bottom of the page. You can uncheck periods as well if you schedule trips after reporting a

period as non-fishing on the same page. Call me if you need to unlock a current period, or if you need help unlocking other reported periods.



If you are unsure of what periods you have already reported, and which are still due, "Reporting History" is available in your accounts (mobile and computer links). This displays, by reporting period, the number of trips reported, due date, and date and time of submission of completed reports. You can also download/print a receipt if needed here. If you don't see a reporting period in your Reporting History, you have not completed reporting for that period yet. Go to "Submit Reports" to submit any current or past due periods.

Law enforcement action has increased this year concerning delinquent charter reporting. Please make sure to have reports submitted

by the twice monthly due dates: **2nd Wednesday and 4th Wednesday** of each month by 11pm EST. Please note that Great Lakes reporting periods are not every two weeks, they are twice monthly. If a month has five Wednesdays, your reporting period could be three weeks long. Reports must be submitted even when you don't fish.

As fall approaches, many charter captains will begin chasing salmon and trout inside the Great Lakes shorelines in rivers, drowned river mouths, and inland lakes.

Remember that beginning March 1, 2024, an Inland Sportfishing Guide License is required for those who charter or guide inland. Inland locations are defined as both navigable and non-navigable waters inside the Great Lakes shoreline. This 3-year license is normally \$150 for Michigan residents, but those with a valid USCG captain's license have their fee waived. Thank you to those who obtained the Inland Guide license already and remember reporting is monthly for inland and due on the 1st of every month. Please visit the following website for more information: Inland fishing guides (michigan.gov)

Another reminder about the Inland Sportfishing Guide License: The process to obtain the license involves two steps: 1. Complete the questionnaire at the link above. 2. After you receive an email authorization, go to the MDNR e-license site (or use your Hunt/Fish App) to obtain the license. You will not receive a license or sticker in the mail, this is an electronic license. You can print or save a copy of the license on your device. After you obtain the license, I will call you about adding inland reporting to your current FACTS reporting account.

I appreciate your continued cooperation with the twice monthly reports. I understand you are all busy during the season, but we ask that you continue to provide accurate trip

data in a timely manner. This data is important to the management of the resource, which is important to all of us. As always, please reach out if you are having difficulties with the reporting system or if an emergency comes up and you cannot report. For these situations, I will always try my best to assist.

Looking forward to seeing you all at the annual MCBA meeting in October. Please let me know if there is something specific you are interested in hearing about during the meeting.

For assistance with reporting, or questions about the Inland Sportfishing Guide license please contact Kendra Kozlauskos at 231-330-2845 or DNR-Fish-Charter@michigan.gov Questions on fishery trends and future analyses of charter or inland guide data, please contact Chris Kemp at 248-860-3804 or Kempc5@michigan.gov



USCG LICENSE RENEWAL HELP

SEAK'S LICENSING LORE

As summer winds down, thoughts of snowblowers and shovels begin. I hope you are all having a great 2024 fishing season.

In the world of maritime licensing, things continue to deteriorate at a rapid pace...60-90 days for a new medical certificate and at least 8 weeks for a simple license renewal. These delays, coupled with "evaluators" at the NMC who don't know, and in many cases, don't care, have caused headaches for mariners and companies across the country. In my 40+ years of maritime licensing it's some of the worst I've ever seen. Accurate paperwork is more important now than ever before. "Common Sense" is a thing of the past. The NMC now allows you to send your application package directly to them instead of to the Regional Exam Centers. Sounds good in theory but I caution you. If it takes them 8 weeks to process your paperwork and then they find mistakes, you can add another month to the processing time. I'm recommending starting your renewal 6 months early. If you start then, you can keep your same expiration date so you will get the full 5 years you are paying for even if you start early. I understand the annual conference has been moved to next Spring so I wish you all a safe and happy holiday season.

Lt. Commander, USCG (retired) Charles "Chuck" Kakuska a Maritime Licensing Specialist, has been assisting our members for over the past 20 years. Give him a call at (734)847-1723 or email SEAKsLic@aol.com for help with your USCG/MMC renewal.



The Evolution of Charter Fishing in the Age of Social Media

Captain John Milbourne
Michigan Sport Fishing Company LLC
www.michigansportfishing.com

They say time waits for no man and boy do I know it! It feels like just yesterday I kick-started my charter service, amidst the naysayers who scoffed at the idea of internet and websites. That was a quarter of a century ago; now we're in the days of a social media frenzy and I often find myself questioning if our customers are truly on board with this race to the dock mentality that modern Great Lakes charter captains have adopted.

Post-COVID Shifts in Charter Clients

In the post-COVID era, I've noticed a shift in our charter clients. There's an increase in family outings and outdoor vacation planning, with groups exploring the local scene and filling their days with forest treks, canoeing, fishing, and hunting. My longer charter trip offerings, which were once dwindling due to costs, are now making a comeback as people flock to our corner of the Great Lakes.

The Social Media Race and Charter Fishing

The latest trend within charter fishing is to be the first captain to post the day's catch on

social media. While this race to the limit may stroke the captain's ego, I can't help but wonder if it comes at the expense of the charter client. I mean, how do customers feel about shelling out today's charter rates for a fishing trip that lasts just one hour?

A Lesson from the Past

I learned a valuable lesson on this matter back in the early 2000s, fishing from the port of Luna Pier on Lake Erie. The 2003-year class of walleye was the best in decades, with 30 fish caught an hour, sometimes across three trips daily. It was a total whack-fest for weeks on end. However, the following year, I noticed a slump in my bookings. Certain repeat clients were conspicuously absent from my books. So, I took to the phones and reached out to my past customers, assuring them that the upcoming year was shaping up to be just as prosperous. To my surprise, the common response was: "That was great and all but...I never had time to eat my sandwich, drink a pop and chat with my group." It was a lightbulb moment. I hadn't lost customers because of good fishing; I had lost them because I didn't meet their expectations for the day. They had planned for an adventure, traveling to my boat, eager and ready, only for it to be over within an hour. Lesson learned indeed.

What Makes a Charter Captain Great?

We captains, we're a pretty skilled bunch. Some of us, admittedly, are better than others – just ask us! The dock and Facebook are never short of a captain's ego. Some customers buy into this race mentality, but I'm guessing most don't. As captains, we have a choice: we can take people fishing...or we can offer them an unforgettable experience, creating lifelong clients and friends.

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A VIEW FROM OVER THE TRANSOM

By Captain Jim Fenner

MCBA Secretary, 2008 – 2012

I retired from active charter boat fishing in 2012. Because I was then no longer an active Captain, I could not continue to be on the board of the MCBA. However, that did not change my desire to continue to be an active supporter of the MCBA, and to be a member in the newly created 'retired Captain' category. That was some 48 newsletters ago.

Since then, a small number of retired members have taken advantage of the "Retired Captain" category, and I'm happy for that. And over those years, I've enjoyed seeing these mostly "old friends" at the annual conferences. And staying in touch has brought me many new friends as well. I'm glad I decided to keep up my membership. It has kept me informed and involved over the years.

During these past twelve years I've witnessed a lot of changes. Changes in the fishery; changes in the way we fish; changes in the way we do our businesses; and yes, also many changes in the Association. At this fall's meeting there will likely only be one person on the board who was there when I retired. Fortunately, with a couple of exceptions, I have met and gotten to know the newer board members. I find them to as interested and dedicated to the Association as much as any of us were when I was a part of the board. And so, I have great expectations for the future and the continued successfulness of the MCBA.

Returning to my main theme: Change is hard. The MCBA is making the hard decisions that the changing times and situations require. The decision to move the annual conference to the spring was a hard decision, but was one the new board believes is necessary. The MCBA, its officer and

directors, have been working hard for the last year or two dealing with the changing digital and physical problems for organizations such as we are. It has been complicated and expensive work, and has put a strain on the Association, its officers and board members.



It's good to know that the officers and board members are continuing to work hard to bring the Association fully into the digital age and are adjusting both our digital and physical meeting requirements. Change is hard, and these changes have been particularly hard, and difficult decisions have had to be made. Remember that all the officers and board members are volunteers and serve without pay beyond expenses. The effort they put in to keep, maintain and improve our association is very time consuming. Fortunately, these volunteers are giving the Association freely of their time. They certainly deserve our support and appreciation. I for one, want to thank them for all they do. This is one of the reasons I continue to support and assist the Association in any way I can as a retired officer and Captain.

Speaking now from my personal side: I was saddened to learn of the resignations of treasurer Larry Lienczewski, and webmaster Maxine Appleby. Both are long-time personal friends who I worked with for many years, both in the MCBA, and during my years as President of the Ludington Charter Boat Association.

Larry and I worked hard together and often during my years on the board of the MCBA, planning the annual conferences and working the many membership documents.

Maxine wrote my personal website and the website for the Ludington Area Charter Boat Association during my Presidency. It was all new then and we worked well together. While they are both leaving the MCBA, I have always counted them as being among my own close

personal friends, and I always will. I wish them well as they move on from their Association positions.

Finally, even though I'm retired, I get the newsletter, the emails, etc. At the various conferences I catch up with many friends

from my active membership days. Good friends, good information, good times. Maybe I will see you there. Meanwhile, keep a tight line.

Jim Fenner
MCBA Captain, Retired

MCBA Drug Program Reminders

- **EAP:** Employee Assistance Program is required for vessel employees.
- Pre-employment testing exemptions:
Passed DOT chemical test within previous six months or: Subject to DOT random testing for at least 60 of the previous 185 days and has never refused to test or failed a test.
- Service Agents SAP: Substance Abuse Professional
- BAT: Breath Alcohol Technician.
- The MRO: Medical Review Officer is required to have special training.
- Periodic testing is for MMCs and renewals. If you participate in a USCG "random or pre-employment drug test program," this may not be necessary: (MCBA members) True
- Random selections must be made by someone not subject to the requirements: True
- Serious Marine Incident is: Casualty resulting in death, injury requiring medical treatment beyond first aid, damage excess \$100,000 or loss of vessel.
- The Designated Employer Rep is responsible to see that drug and alcohol tests are done.
- Reasonable cause to do a drug test is determined by: Supervisor/employer.
- Qualification training is required for collector, MRO, BAT, or SAP.



Did you Know?

The Importance of HTTPS Over HTTP and why your websites are not visible on the MCBA website.

First, what is HTTPS?

HTTPS (Hypertext Transfer Protocol Secure) is an extension of HTTP. It uses encryption to secure the data transmitted between a user's browser and the website.

New Policies: Both Google and Microsoft are increasingly emphasizing the importance of HTTPS for website security. Here are the key points regarding their new policies:

1. Google's Policy:

- **Chrome Browser:** Google Chrome now marks all HTTP sites as "Not Secure." This warning is displayed with a **red "X"** on the URL bar, indicating that the connection is not secure.
- **Search Rankings:** Google uses HTTPS as a ranking signal. Websites using HTTPS can have an advantage in search engine results.
- **User Experience:** When users attempt to visit an HTTP site, they will often see a security warning and need to click on "Advanced" to proceed, which can deter visitors.

2. Microsoft's Policy:

- **Edge Browser:** Similar to Chrome, Microsoft Edge also marks HTTP sites as "Not Secure" and

displays warnings to users.

- **Security Focus:** Microsoft is focused on promoting a secure web environment. The Edge browser encourages users to visit HTTPS sites to ensure they are protected.

Here is a Scenario to explain: A Fishing Charter Captain's Website

Imagine a fishing charter captain advertising their charter business using their website. The captain relies on their website to attract new customers, share booking information, and post updates about fishing conditions. However, the website uses HTTP instead of HTTPS.

1. **Initial Visit:** A potential customer visits the website and sees a "Not Secure" warning in their browser. The warning might look like a **red "X"** on the URL bar, signaling that the connection is not secure.

2. **Proceeding with Caution:** The customer clicks on "Advanced" and then "Proceed" to continue to the site, but this experience makes them wary of the site's security and the business's credibility.

3. **Browser Cache:** After the initial visit, the browser often caches this decision. When the customer returns to the site later, they may not see the warning again due to cached permissions, but the initial negative impression remains.

4. **Missed Opportunities:** Potential customers who are not as tech-savvy may be deterred by the security warning and choose not to proceed, leading to lost business opportunities.

How to Implement HTTPS

1. **Obtain an SSL Certificate:** Purchase an

SSL certificate from a trusted Certificate Authority (CA) or use a free option like "Let's Encrypt".

2. Install the SSL Certificate: Follow your web hosting provider's instructions to install the SSL certificate on your server.

Update Website Links: Ensure that all internal links, scripts, and resources are updated to use HTTPS.

3. Redirect HTTP to HTTPS: Set up 301 redirects from HTTP to HTTPS to ensure that users and search engines are directed to the secure version of your site.

4. Update Sitemaps and Robots.txt: Update your sitemaps and robots.txt files to reference the HTTPS URLs.

Conclusion:

MCBA as a website owner shifted to HTTPS about five years ago. When you renew or sign up new a letter stating this policy is included. It is also available of the website to download. Because this significant move by Google and Microsoft to enhance web security, MCBA will not display websites that are insecure.

INVOLVEMENT IS ADDICTING

By Captain Dick Stafford
MCBA Past President

Now is the time of year when captains should be asking themselves pertinent questions about their businesses:

- Is my brochure working?
- Am I getting the most out of the Internet? advertising?
- Am I spending too much or too little?
- Am I really keeping up with what is

going on in my industry?

- Am I adapting to the changes in my charter industry?

If you have asked yourself any of these questions, you are among the most charter captains in Michigan. So, how exactly does this all relate to MCBA you might ask?

MCBA is dedicated to improving the Michigan Charter Industry and helping Michigan captains stay knowledgeable and up to date about what is going on. However, this cannot be done unless there is input from MCBA members. Members must become involved.

Through my long-time involvement with MCBA as Port Captain for Escanaba, Director for the Upper Peninsula (Lakes Michigan and Superior), and as MCBA President, I heard from members that the Board of Directors positions are just for the "Old Guys". Granted, the MCBA Board of Directors represents about 180 years of experience in the charter industry but the success of MCBA lies deeper than all this experience. The success and vitality of MCBA lies with the involvement of each individual member's input.

Younger captains in our association bring with them expertise in computer, internet, and social media skills as well as different marketing strategies, which, in turn, help our entire association. It helps all of us stay "UP" on what is out there. Latest ideas are brought to board meetings, discussed, and eventually included in our fall conference in the form of presentations given by experts in their fields. This is one reason the MCBA Conference is so educational and informative. Members are encouraged to attend this conference, learn what is going on and submit their input on current events.

The MCBA Board of Directors consists of one Executive Secretary, four officers and seven Lake Directors. The officers are elected every year while the Lake Directors are elected for two-year terms. The Lake Director appoints Port Captains. Elections are held at the fall general membership meeting. Individual concerns should be submitted to the Port Captain, which will then be handed over to the Lake Director, but members

should feel free to address concerns directly to the Lake Director. These concerns will be dealt with in a very timely manner.

In summary, the Michigan Charter Boat Association not only needs a constant flow of fresh ideas but **NEEDS YOUR INVOLVEMENT**. Remember, "Involvement" leads to greater knowledge thus improving business.

Capt. Dick Stafford
MCBA Past President



You made it to the end. Good work. Thanks for being a member and let's open up a dialog to the Directors and the Association Officers to get your opinions on where to move forward to. Thanks again all.

 **VISIT MCBA Members Area**
www.MCBAMembers.com