



The Evening

Hatch

The Newsletter of the Michigan Fly Fishing Club

October 2024 Edition

Consumers Energy may get \$770M from Feds to fix century-old Michigan dams

Consumers Energy's license to generate hydropower at the Alcona Dam, on the Au Sable River, expires in 2034. The company is considering selling Alcona and 12 other dams that generate small amounts of power. (Bridge Michigan photo by Kelly House)



More than \$770 million in federal funding could be directed to Consumers Energy's hydropower dams in Michigan, fueling speculation that the company may keep at least some of the aging structures intact.

Facing massive costs to maintain the 13 dams, which provide minimal electricity at a premium price, Consumers has publicly mulled an exit from the hydropower business for more than two years.

Company officials say they can't justify making ratepayers cover the hundreds of millions in looming

maintenance costs at the dams, when they could instead get electricity from far cheaper sources. No funding announcement at this timeframe.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has invited Consumers to apply for up to \$749 million in loans for safety upgrades at six dams. A week earlier, a separate federal program awarded \$23 million for work on 10 of the dams.

The agency loan would finance repairs and upgrades at Rogers and Hardy dams on the Muskegon River.

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Upcoming Club Events

- 10/02/24: Activity Meeting
- 10/09/24: Board Meeting
- 10/16/24: Afternoon Casting Clinic
- 10/16/24: Speaker Meeting
- 11/06/24: Speaker Meeting
- 11/13/24: Board Meeting
- 11/20/24: Activity Meeting
- 12/04/24: Speaker Meeting
- 12/06/24: Rod Building Class
- 12/11/24: Board Meeting
- 12/18/24: Garage Sale Event
- 01/08/25: Speaker Meeting
- 01/09/25: Ultimate Fishing Show
- 01/15/25: Board Meeting
- 01/22/25: Activity Meeting
- 02/05/25: Speaker Meeting
- 02/12/25: Board Meeting
- 02/19/25: Activity Meeting
- 02/20/25: Outdoorama
- 02/22/25: White River Trip #1
- 03/05/25: Activity Meeting
- 03/08/25: Midwest Flyfishing Expo
- 03/09/25: Midwest Flyfishing Expo
- 03/12/25: Board Meeting
- 03/15/25: White River Trip #2
- 03/19/25: Speaker Meeting
- 04/02/25: Speaker Meeting
- 04/09/25: Board Meeting
- 04/16/25: Activity Meeting
- 05/07/25: Activity Meeting
- 05/12/25: Board Meeting
- 05/14/25: MFFC Banquet

For the most current listing of events, check our club's website: mffc.org

**Michigan Fly Fishing Club
Board of Directors Meeting
September 18th, 2024**

Roll Call:

Meeting called to order at 7:30pm

Present: K. Lipp; S. Hunter; J. Bada; ;
J. Aitken, J. Aukee; N. Tabaka; J.
Haxton, T. DeFauw

Absent:

Approval of the Minutes: minutes
from 05/08/24 approved

Approval of the Agenda: agenda
from 09/18/24 approved

Officer’s Report

President: K. Lipp

- Constitution Review-Important for board to review and check dates Friday before meeting and Hatch
- President’s email is the club email, please send correspondence to it.
- We need a Corresponding Secretary
- Add FFI Expo 9/25 in Grand Rapids
- Need help in the Library

Vice President: J. Bada

- The Hatch is ready for the printer

Treasurer: J. Aitken

- No Activity to report, July 1st Status Fiscal Year end 07/31, 08/01 New Fiscal Year
- September Hatch includes the budget
- a full group of new members are scheduled for WaWaSum
- some conservation grants were made

Corresponding Secretary: S. Hunter
(interim)

- Swapping Activity and Speaker meetings for October
- Mark Hendrick, April Speaker
- Todd Shotts will do a Frogging discussion
- We need Speakers

Membership: J. Eriksson

- Total members at fiscal year’s end 07/31/24: 407 members

- Member surveys were mailed to 422

Events and Outings:

- Driftless Trip - 09/29
- Ultimate Fishing and Outdoorama signups will start with October meetings
- Arkansas Trip #1 - 02/22/25
- Arkansas Trip #2 - 03/15/25
- Midwest Expo - 03/08/25
- MFFC Banquet -05/14/25
- FFI Expo 09/25/25 in Grand Rapids

Old Business:

- New Member Packets were mailed to 2024 New Members this month

New Business:

- WaWaSum July new member outing stays. Discussion on “family outing” at WaWaSum for the third weekend of July was discussed.
- WCCC will host the Member School again and possibly the Boy Scout and Youth School which would provide savings. They also inquired if we would participate in a Halloween event on October 21st. Norm Tabaka and David Oakley offered to participate.
- HFF would like to do another rod building class on a December weekend.

Visitors:

- Tom Coleman – wants to learn more about how the club operates



New Club Members: Tight Lines!!
Mike Aylor (Alma, MI)
Sheldon Edelstein (Farmington Hills, MI)
Scott Terzich (Northville,, MI)
Dave Wonnacott (Livonia,, MI)
Karen Wozniak Davisburg,, MI)
Lance Wozniak (Davisburg,, MI)

2024-2025 Club Officers

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Some of Us Started the Summer Off with a Bang: We Built Rods at HFF

Here is the summary of events (and experiences) for about seven club members did around Father's Day weekend. It was both fun and tiring (specially for us with less dexterity than the younger whipper-snappers). But still a great time had by all!!

T-Minus 1 Week: a week prior to the start of the Build Session
Advised by HFF Custom Rods (in Taylor, MI) to pick out:

- Weight & size of the rod blank you intend to build. There was a wide variety of weights and rod lengths to choose from at HFF Custom Rod.
- Basic components such as single or double foot guides, reel seat, cork handles, thread colors

This is an important pre-class visit, just in case HFF has to order out of stock or unique components to support your build.

Day 1: Friday Evening Session from 6:00pm – 9:00 pm

A quick intro to the classroom bench/worktable equipment, materials and other components that will be used for your rod building session. Note, for a reasonable classroom fee, guest builders were allowed use of many HFF supplies & equipment instead of purchasing them ourselves.

First thing we did, was to ensure that the cork handle we selected would fit onto the end of the rod. If not, a specialized cork reamer would be used to carefully widen the handle's inside diameter. Note, extra care must be taken otherwise the reaming tool might overheat, thus causing to expand while inside the cork handle as in the case that caused the author, to mess up a couple of handles!!

The next step was to mix up two part epoxy glue to secure the seat cap, reel seat and cork handle grips onto the base of your multi-piece fly rod.

While the glue hardened, Joe Haywood started to give us lessons on how to use our threads to start wrapping our hook guides and onto our guides. Note, that if you have a double foot guide, you will need extra time to wrap both sides of the guides' footing.



Plenty of Hands-On Demos by HFF's Joe Haywood.
Do you recognize these club members?

Day 2: Saturday Full Day from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM

We did a quick check, to see if we mixed the epoxy correctly and luckily we followed their great instructions.

Now we start assembling the blank sections onto the rod station.



First Group of MFFC Rod Builders at the HFF Facility

Placing threads onto your guides was the most tedious part of the build. Precise attention to your wrap tension was key. Patience on getting it done correctly the first and sometimes the second and third time was experienced by the entire class. Both Joe and Steve were on-hand if you got frustrated or need a helping hand.

Even though we took a nice lunch break, we continued to wrap some 8-10 guides for most of the afternoon. If we were confident with our wraps, we even had an opportunity to apply a second color thread to the end of our wraps for a little Rick Flair touch. Once that was done, the application of decals and the first coat of epoxy completed our full day of wrapping.

Day 3: Sunday morning from 9:00am - noon

We grabbed some straight edge razors and carefully removed exposed nubs from our thread wraps. Another coat of epoxy was applied over the threaded guide feet. Easy Peazzie - Right?



First Group of MFFC Rod Builders at the HFF Facility

Day 4: Anytime after Tuesday

After the second coat of epoxy dried for forty-eight hours, we were able to pick up our completed rod from HFF.

(Continued from Page 1)

Consumers Energy may get \$770M from Feds to fix century-old Michigan dams

Hodenpyl Dam on the Manistee River, and Alcona, Loud and Five Channels dams on the Au Sable River

In total, the Army Corps invited nearly \$3.2 billion-worth of proposals from 18 dam owners across the country, including the City of Ann Arbor. The \$749 million on the table for Consumers is more than any of the other 17 projects.

“While we’re still gathering information, we promise to continue communicating as openly as we can before we reach the point where we make any decisions,” company spokesperson Brian Wheeler said.

Fans of the dams view the funding invitation as a hopeful sign they could be sticking around, along with the reservoirs that have become prized local recreational lakes. “It’s great news, assuming Consumers takes advantage of it,” said Mark Wilsey, who owns a house on the reservoir created by Mio Dam and founded a [Facebook group](#) dedicated to saving the dams.

River advocates have long fought to remove the dams. Bryan Burroughs, executive director of Michigan Trout Unlimited, argued that using taxpayer dollars to shore up the impoundments is just subsidizing a problem. “Basically all taxpayers in the United States of America are then paying to keep dams that aren’t doing a very good job at what they were designed to do,”

Built an average of 106 years ago, the Michigan dams inundated 17,200 acres of land to create reservoirs that at the time provided a cheap, important energy source for a growing state. Michigan’s energy mix has since evolved. The dams now generate just 1% of Consumers’ electricity, at nine times the cost of any other power source.

Reservoirs boost tourism and raise property values. But they also block fish migration and heat water, hurting fish, like salmon and trout.

Consumers has one year to apply for the Army Corps loan. It’s unclear when the agency could make a final decision. “Consumers Energy is committed to doing what’s right for our customers and the communities we serve,” Wheeler said. “That’s why we made clear that we’d be seeking other sources of funding that would lower costs and add to the discussion around the dams’ future.”

The federal program offering the loan, known as the Corps Water Infrastructure Financing Program, was created to fund dam repair, maintenance and upgrade projects that reduce flood damage, restore river ecosystems or improve navigation.

“Dam safety improvements typically reduce the probability of failure and therefore reduce the overall risk of flood damage occurring,” said Corps spokesperson Gene Pawlik.

As it prepares to apply, Consumers is reviewing bids from prospective buyers after it announced willingness to sell the dams for as little as \$1 apiece.

“We will continue to review outside bids to own and operate our 13 dams through the rest of this year and evaluate what impact that these loans could potentially have,” Wheeler said. Offloading the dams would free Consumers from a financial burden but could present other risks.

Michigan utilities have a history of selling unwanted dams at cut-rate prices to new owners who can’t afford the cost of upkeep, ultimately leaving taxpayers to cover the bill.

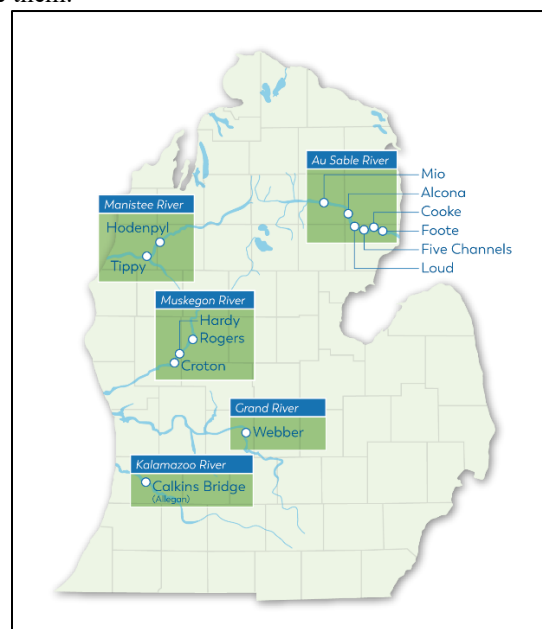
After privately owned dams in Midland failed in 2020 and caused \$200 million in property damage and \$200 million in taxpayer-funded dam repair costs, a state task force recommended reforms designed to prevent sales to financially irresponsible dam owners, including a requirement they prove they can afford to safely operate their dams.

Consumers officials said while they intend to apply for the funding, they are still mulling whether to keep, sell, or dismantle the dams

- Consumers Energy is debating whether to keep, sell or demolish 13 aging Michigan dams
- Now, the company could be in line for more than \$770 million in federal funding for dam safety upgrades
- The issue has split residents and conservationists because the dams are good for property values but bad for fish

Consumers Energy Hydropower Dams

Consumers Energy is debating the future of its 13 hydroelectric dams, including whether to keep the impoundments in place or remove them.



Author: Kelly House / *Bridge Michigan* on 09/16/24
email - khouse@bridgemi.com or X - @Kelly_M_House

I Speak for the Fish: A Sturgeon goes to Wisconsin and a Michigan Muskie visits New York

A male lake sturgeon was tagged under the Blue Water Bridge, in the early 1990s. As a member of the largest spawning population of sturgeon in the Great Lakes, he would only be in the area for a few weeks and researchers wanted to know where he would go when the spawn was over.

At this time, Canada's Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources did a population assessment on the lake sturgeon that spawned near the Blue Water Bridge. The study estimated 26,689 adult lake sturgeon spawned on the site. However, that does not mean there are nearly 30,000 sturgeon on site each year.

Lake sturgeon only spawn once every 3-4 years on average. Some males will spawn more often and some females may wait longer. If we use 3 years as an average, then roughly 10,000 lake sturgeon spawn on the Blue Water site each year.

Of those 10,000 spawning adults, maybe a thousand are residents, meaning they live in the area year-round. This means that as many as 9,000 sturgeon travel from other parts of the Great Lakes to reach the Blue Water site each year.

To find out just how far these sturgeon travel, researchers with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service caught a male lake sturgeon in lower Lake Huron just upstream of the spawning site and surgically implanted an acoustic telemetry tag. The acoustic tag allows the researchers to track the fish's movements.

Was he a resident? Or would he leave the area? And if he left, would he go north into Lake Huron or south to Lake St. Clair, or even Lake Erie?

The newly deployed Great Lakes Acoustic Telemetry Observing System (GLATOS) would enable researchers to answer these questions. And the answer they got surprised everyone.

How acoustic telemetry works



When I first heard about the fish tracking system in the Great Lakes, I was a bit confused about how it worked.

I'd heard that buoys were being deployed across the basin to track fish movements and I pictured a bunch of units that floated on the surface and somehow tracked the fish below. It's actually the opposite.

Telemetry receivers are typically attached to an anchor on the bottom. A small float is attached to the top of the receiver with just enough buoyancy to keep the device upright and off the bottom. The receivers are actively listening for fish 24/7. When a tagged fish swims past, the receiver records the fish's identification number. With over two thousand receivers currently deployed and listening, there are fewer and fewer places a tagged fish can travel without being recorded.

All the fish passages are digitally stored inside the receivers. To access the data, researchers have to physically retrieve the units. Usually once each year, all 2,000 receivers will be retrieved by hundreds of researchers across the basin. Everyone sends the data to GLATOS which serves as the central data hub.

When all the receiver data is available, researchers can submit a list of tag numbers and GLATOS will provide a list of every location where those tags were recorded.

Some tags talk. Some don't.

The tags more commonly used in fisheries research are passive integrated transponders or PIT tags. These tags are smaller than a grain of wild rice and they are inserted right under the fish's skin with a small handheld device. When researchers are working quickly, the PIT tags are often inserted faster than my camera can autofocus.

PIT tags are 'passive' because they do not emit any signals. If a PIT-tagged fish is caught, the tag can be read with a portable scanner. There are hundreds of thousands of fish in the Great Lakes carrying PIT tags and none of those tags are being tracked by the telemetry receivers.

Telemetry tags work differently. Acoustic telemetry tags emit an audible signal, essentially shouting out their ID numbers 24/7. So anytime a fish with an acoustic tag swims by a receiver, the tag number, date, and time are recorded.

Acoustic tags range in size from about an inch to three inches. They are cylindrical and the larger ones resemble a shotgun shell or a lipstick case depending on your point of reference.

Implanting telemetry tags requires a surgical procedure complete with sterile instruments and anesthesia. Researchers make a small incision in the fish's belly, insert the tag, and stitch the cut closed. The wound heals within a few weeks as evidenced by fish that have been recaptured several weeks after receiving their tags and their bellies are all healed up.

One of the challenges for researchers is determining how often the tags shout out their numbers. The tags have a limited battery life and an acoustic tag small enough for a sunfish to carry has a very limited amount of juice.

If the tag shouts out the number too often it will drain the battery and reduce the amount of tracking data obtained. If the tag doesn't shout out its number often enough the fish might swim past a receiver without getting recorded. This tends to make the data jumpy which isn't ideal.

In large fish like sturgeon and muskie, the tag can transmit for several years which has enabled researchers to get a much better picture of how these fish are using the entire Great Lakes.

A muskie known as 007



I could not have written a better acoustic telemetry tale than the real-life 007. It's screenplay perfection that the muskie with tag number 007 likes to travel and break the rules.

Historically, muskie were thought to remain within a relatively small territory. The Michigan DNR expected the muskie tagged in Lake St. Clair to basically stay in Lake St. Clair. The purpose of tagging the fish was to try and learn which parts of the lake they were utilizing at different times of the year.

But 007 didn't do what most muskies do. After being tagged, 007 headed south. He went down the Detroit River to Lake Erie and then swam across the lake to Buffalo, New York! The journey took him about two months. He stayed there for 3 to 4 months.

His return took half the time. He went from the eastern end of Lake Erie back to Lake St. Clair in about a month. He stayed in Lake St. Clair for the next year and then repeated his trip to New York and back the following year. When the DNR requested the tracking data for tag 007, they did not anticipate the tag had been recorded by receivers from Detroit to Buffalo and back.

Tracking sturgeon travels

The lake sturgeon tagged under the Blue Water Bridge went even farther. After being tagged and released the sturgeon headed north out into Lake Huron. This was not surprising. What was surprising was that he didn't stop. He swam the entire length of Lake Huron, passed through the Strait at Mackinaw, crossed the top of Lake Michigan, and cruised into Green Bay.



He spent two years in the big Wisconsin bay. The third year, he headed back across Lake Michigan, through the Strait, and into Lake Huron. This put him on track for the spawn-every-three-year average. But he didn't go to the Blue Water spawn site.

Instead, he took a sharp right turn into Saginaw Bay. And he stayed there for another year. Four years after he was tagged, he would return to the Blue Water site to spawn.

These epic long-distance journeys are a great reminder that the Great Lakes are one gigantic system. While we may separate them by federal, provincial, state, and local lines: the fish don't.

For more about how acoustic telemetry is being used in large urban cities like Chicago, keep your eyes out for another companion article, and the latest Great Lakes Now episode about tracking fish—airing on Monday, September 30.

I Speak for the Fish is a monthly column written by Great Lakes Now Contributor Kathy Johnson (published on 09/16/24)



Are you interested on Rod Building at HFF Custom Rods? Our next MFFC Build Session will be December 6th – 8th.

Contact Jon Bada (vicepresident@mffc.org) to find out more information and to reserve your spot (limited number of building benches are available). Or contact Steve Haywood (stevenh@hffccustomrods.com) if you would like to know what varieties of blanks and components they have at HFF. If space allows, I will build a 3wt rod using a Mike McFarland blank!!

According to John Aukee, “*the class was a blast. It was a very good challenge and rewarding to the end*”

Checking in on young walleye: Michigan DNR begins fall surveys in September

If you're on the water in late September to early October, be on the lookout for Michigan Department of Natural Resources personnel conducting nighttime walleye recruitment surveys. Fisheries managers use these surveys to determine whether walleye that hatched in the spring (known as young-of-year) were born in the wild or were stocked, as well as how many are present in an area. This information about the status of young walleye in lakes helps the DNR make well-informed management decisions.



Using electrofishing boats at night, crews will survey shallow areas near the shoreline of lakes with the goal of capturing juvenile walleye. Walleye prefer cooler, deeper areas of lakes during the day but move into shallow, nearshore areas at night, making nighttime surveys more efficient. On larger lakes, two or more electrofishing crews using separate boats may operate at the same time to cover more area. The crews will work on a subsample of Michigan lakes that have been stocked with walleye, as well as lakes that have not.

Biologists also collect and keep a sample of young-of-year walleye from stocked lakes to determine whether the fish are primarily reproducing naturally or if young-of-year are from stocking. All other walleye will be released unharmed. Walleye that are stocked in these lakes are marked with oxytetracycline, a chemical marker that can be observed within captured fish by using a microscope with an ultraviolet light source in a laboratory setting.

Some surveys will be conducted collaboratively with tribal agencies; tribal natural resource departments also will conduct surveys independently of the DNR. In the Upper Peninsula, the U.S. Forest Service will also be collaborating on surveys and conducting independent surveys in the Hiawatha National Forest as part of an effort to create long-term datasets for a number of inland lakes managed for walleye.

Everyone is urged to use caution when fishing or on the water near electrofishing boats, and anyone wading will be asked to exit the water when a survey boat approaches and during electrofishing work. Crews will be using bright lights to illuminate the water around the boat and running a generator on board, which may make it difficult to hear and speak with anyone on shore, such as anglers and lake residents.

Contacts: Emily Martin, 231-495-1310 or John Bauman, 906-786-2351, both are with the Michigan DNR



MFFC 2024 Youth School

The MFFC Youth School is the very embodiment of one of MFFC's goals – the education of newcomers to our sport. Education, demonstration, and execution of how to be a successful fly fisher are what the Youth School is all about.

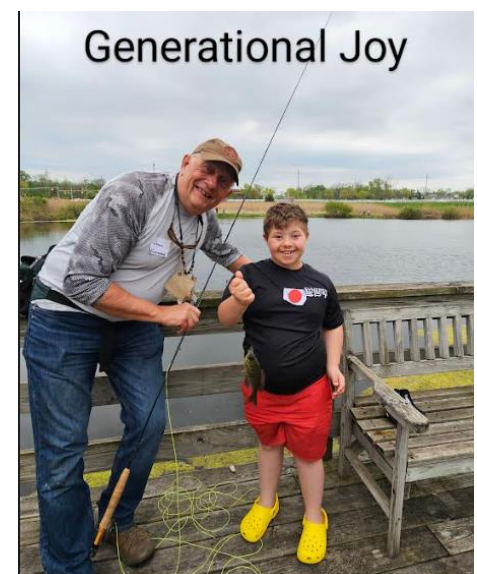
On the first Saturday in May, traditionally, MFFC volunteer members educate, train, and guide select youth – all sponsored by a MFFC member – in the basic skills needed to catch fish on a fly. There were seven (7) sponsored youth for our May 4, 2024 Youth School. With an age range of 8 to 15, and an average age of 11.5, there were five first-time attendees.

Several were very quick to catch the basics, both of tying flies and casting. In terms of catching fish, the more-experienced youth enjoyed good success in hooking and landing fish. With bluegills as the most-caught fish species, largemouth bass created extra excitement. An occasional crappie was added to the mix.

The Youth School instructional agenda was highlighted by entomology, fly tying, casting, an orientation to knots, and how to use/wear basic equipment. Where to find fish was included. An emphasis on safety and fishing etiquette rounded out the classroom time. While there was not much "note-taking" by the youth, each family attending took home an Orvis® book, Family Friendly Fly Fishing. (Again, an MFFC member/mentor donated the books to be a guide after the school). Each youth was also provided an MFFC fly box with some of the favorite flies tied by club members. These were added to the flies tied by the youth. Thank you club tyers!

THANK YOU to all our volunteers!!! This event only occurs because some people sacrifice their time and energy to fulfill our club's mission.

HEADS UP: The tentative plan for the 2025 Youth School is to have it, again, at MSU's Tollgate Farm and Conference Center on Saturday, May 3, 2025.



Pictures form the 2024 MFFC Youth School



Article and pictures were submitted by Len Dizon, Chairperson for the MFFC Youth School



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