

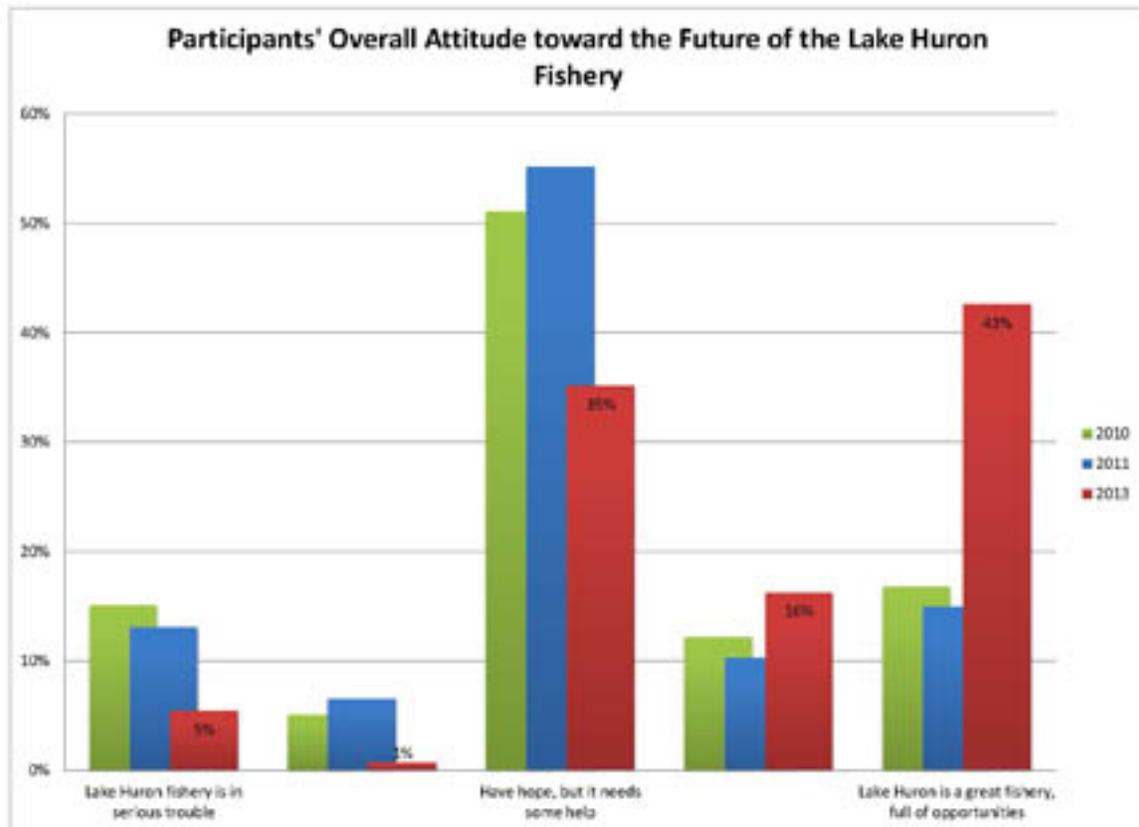
# Positive attitudes toward an improving Lake Huron fishery

**Annual spring Lake Huron fisheries workshops bring coastal communities together with fisheries scientists and decision makers, sharing good news regarding the status of this diverse and valuable fishery.**

Posted on April 30, 2013 by Brandon Schroeder, Michigan State University Extension

Three [Lake Huron Regional Fisheries workshops](#) hosted throughout April in Uby, Oscoda, and Cedarville, Michigan offered good news up and down the coastline regarding the health of the Lake Huron fishery. Nearly 270 interested anglers, charter captains, and other community members came together with fisheries researchers and managers around their shared interest in enhancing this valuable Great Lakes fishery resource.

Since 2005, [Michigan Sea Grant](#) and [Michigan State University Extension](#), in partnership with the [Michigan Department of Natural Resources \(MDNR\) Fisheries Division](#), [USGS Great Lakes Science Center](#), and local fishery organizations have hosted an annual regional workshop series across Lake Huron to help better understand and respond to [Lake Huron's changing fishery](#). These workshops have served to help coastal communities' better understand the ecological changes (or changes within [Lake Huron's food web](#)) occurring within the lake, and to simply check-in with how the fishing has been on Lake Huron. They also reflect an opportunity for citizens to get involved in fisheries research and management discussions, and to explore opportunities for recapturing [social and economic benefits](#)



from this Great Lakes fishery.

This year, researchers shared largely positive information regarding the status and trends of fish populations and fishing on Lake Huron. The overall message, this year, is that Lake Huron is proving to be resilient and, today, offers a diverse and valuable fishing experience, despite drastic ecosystem changes driven by invasive species. Paired with these findings, participants shared a much more positive attitude toward the future of the Lake Huron fishery. When asked about overall attitude toward the future of the Lake Huron fishery, 43% of the responses, on a scale of 1 to 5, feel that “Lake Huron is a great fishery, full of opportunities.” This is a more positive shift in participant attitudes than in years past, when 51% and 55% (in 2010 and 2011 respectively) indicated that they “had hope but [Lake Huron] needs some help”– where another roughly 20% in both years actually tipped more in the direction of the “Lake Huron fishery is in serious trouble” (Figure 1).

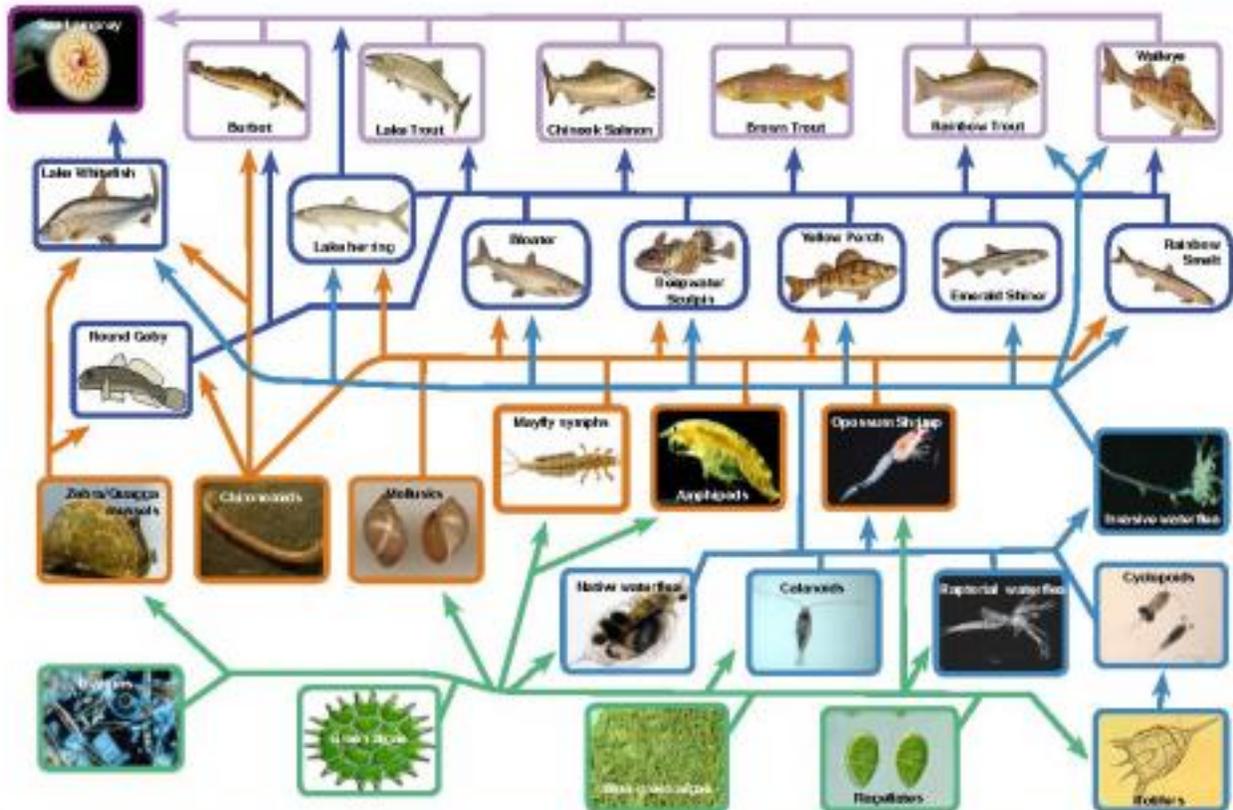
**Why the positive attitude?**

In addressing issues relating to ecological change, fisheries researchers and managers have gained a better understanding of how invasive species have re-designed Lake Huron's food web. Communicating with citizen stakeholders, they have also explored new research and management strategies over the past several years in adapting to the new ecological bounds of Lake Huron ecosystem. Some of these efforts, discussed during these Lake Huron workshops included:

- [Lake Huron Predator Diet study](#) conducted by the USGS Great Lakes Science Center – providing a better understanding of how food (little fish) is flowing through this new food web (what the big fish are eating) (see below).
- [Chinook salmon stocking reductions](#) in recent years have resulted in remaining Chinook salmon, many of which are naturally reproduced, to be faring healthier.
- Increasing natural reproduction and an expanding number of native species (such as Lake Trout and [Walleye](#)) reproduction in Lake Huron previously thought to be suppressed by alewives.
- Increasing research and management emphasis on species succeeding in Lake Huron's new ecosystem, such as [Steelhead](#) and [Atlantic Salmon](#). Steelhead catch and catch rates appear to be as high as ever on Lake Huron and DNR fisheries has recently reared and stocked Atlantic Salmon into Lake Huron waters.
- Research exploring feasibility of reestablishing and [restoring native prey fish \(food\) populations such as cisco](#) (formerly known as Lake Herring).



# Lake Huron Food Web



Foodweb based on "Impact of exotic macroinvertebrate invaders on food web structure and function in the Great Lakes: A network analysis approach" by Mason, Kluze, and Ulanowicz, 2002 - Modified from: for Lake Huron, 2002.

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On the economic side, Michigan Sea Grant Extension has been working with fishery-dependent businesses, such as charter boat captains, in adapting and continuing to reclaim business benefits from this fishery. This includes not only considering different species and new tactics, but also rethinking and rebranding how they market the Lake Huron fishery—that is now less about Chinook salmon and, instead, offers a much more diverse mix of species to catch. In addition, strengthening ties with the broader tourism industry, such as through the Michigan Catch & Cook™ program, has added great value to the Lake Huron charter fishing experience.

Today, several years of combined efforts among fisheries researchers, managers, and engaged stakeholders appear to be paying off. Lake Huron has rebounded as an ecologically diverse and valuable fishery, offering a wealth of fishing opportunities and more positive attitudes among anglers and coastal communities. Stay tuned for future articles that will provide an in depth look at topics presented during these 2013 Lake Huron Fishery

workshops—further exploring how the Lake Huron fishery is faring so well these days.

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