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(FORM UPDATED: 08/11/2010)

WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE ... PUBLIC HEARING - COMMITTEE RECORDS

2011-12

(session year)

Assembly

(Assembly, Senate or Joint)

Committee on Natural Resources...

COMMITTEE NOTICES ...

- Committee Reports ... **CR**
- Executive Sessions ... **ES**
- Public Hearings ... **PH**

INFORMATION COLLECTED BY COMMITTEE FOR AND AGAINST PROPOSAL

- Appointments ... **Appt** (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
- Clearinghouse Rules ... **CRule** (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
- Hearing Records ... bills and resolutions (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
(**ab** = Assembly Bill) (**ar** = Assembly Resolution) (**ajr** = Assembly Joint Resolution)
(**sb** = Senate Bill) (**sr** = Senate Resolution) (**sjr** = Senate Joint Resolution)
- Miscellaneous ... **Misc**

* Contents organized for archiving by: Stefanie Rose (LRB) (August 2013)

Assembly

Record of Committee Proceedings

Committee on Natural Resources

Clearinghouse Rule 11-050

Relating to various changes relating to snowmobiles and all-terrain vehicles (ATVs).

Submitted by Department of Natural Resources.

March 08, 2012 Referred to Committee on Natural Resources.

April 8, 2012 No action taken.

April 25, 2012 **PUBLIC HEARING HELD**

Present: (11) Representatives Mursau, Williams, Nerison, Steineke, Stroebel, Litjens, Molepske Jr, Mason, Danou, Milroy and Hulsey.

Absent: (5) Representatives Rivard, Kleefisch, Severson, Tiffany and Clark.

Excused: (0) None.

Appearances For

- None.

Appearances Against

- None.

Appearances for Information Only

- Diane Conklin, Madison — Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Registrations For

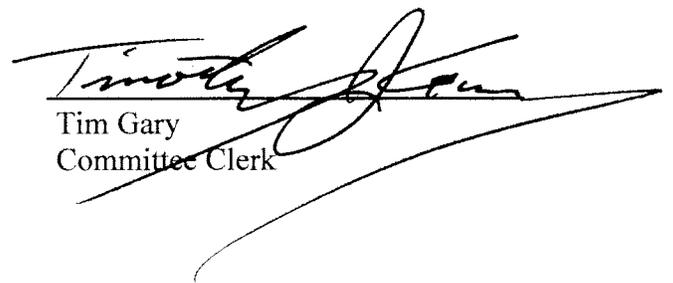
- None.

Registrations Against

- None.

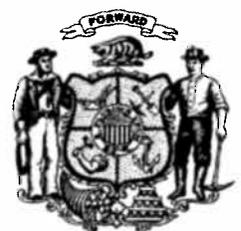
Registrations for Information Only

- None.


Tim Gary
Committee Clerk



WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE





Testimony from the Department of Natural Resources
Clearinghouse Rule 11-049
Natural Resources Board Order FH-25-11
Lake Michigan and Green Bay Commercial Whitefish Season

- Under this rule, six days will be added to the commercial whitefish season. It will benefit commercial fishing and wholesale fish dealer businesses.
- This rule change was requested by the Lake Michigan Commercial Fishing Board.
- Lake Michigan and Green Bay whitefish populations are protected by annual harvest limits, which have not been reached in recent years.

Representative Mursau and members of the Assembly Natural Resources Committee,

My name is Kate Strom Hiorns and I am the Statewide Policy Specialist for the Fisheries Management Bureau. Commercial Fishing Boards advise the Department regarding commercial fishing issues on the Great Lakes. In August of 2011, the Lake Michigan Commercial Fishing Board – made up of five licensed, active commercial fishers; one licensed, active wholesale fish dealer; and one state citizen – recommended extending the commercial whitefish season on Lake Michigan. The Department reviewed and endorsed the recommendation. The current open season for whitefish in Green Bay and Lake Michigan is December 1 through October 25. This rule adds six days to the whitefish commercial harvest season so it will end on October 31. With this extension, the closing date will be the same as the closing date for state-licensed commercial fishers in Michigan.

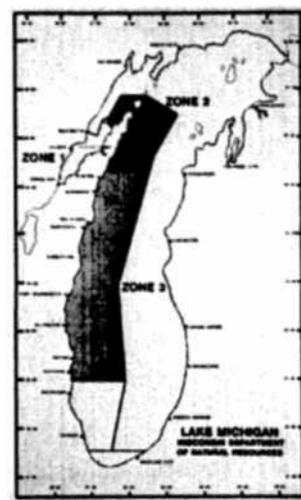
Whitefish are now the mainstay of the commercial fishery in Lake Michigan, as the harvests of yellow perch, rainbow smelt, and chubs have declined significantly since 1990. This rule will likely have a beneficial effect on a dozen commercial fishers. Specific information about the economic viability of these individual businesses is not available, but it is assumed that the increased revenues will contribute toward the health and welfare of their business.

Department biologists believe that the additional six days will not threaten whitefish stocks in Wisconsin waters. The current October 25 closure was established around 1970 and was implemented when whitefish populations were much lower, but recovering. Current abundance and recruitment data indicate that Wisconsin's population is healthy in terms of number of fish. This fishery is managed through a quota system that controls the total annual harvest. At present, whitefish harvest limits are not being reached.

Although there appear to be no immediate biological concerns with this season extension, it will bring the harvest pressure closer to the whitefish spawning period. Adequate spawning time and protection of female fish is necessary for continued health of the population. Because whitefish eggs are a highly valued product of the commercial fishery, extending the harvest closer to the peak of spawning may result in a differential harvest of females over males, resulting in an overall loss of egg deposition and fewer progeny to contribute to the population. In addition, over the past 15 years Department biologists have measured declining body condition in whitefish, resulting in lower levels of egg production and delays in maturation. However, for the past five years, whitefish assessment data show that the October harvest ratio has generally either favored males or been close to a 1:1 catch ratio. Anecdotal information also indicates that fish are spawning at a later date than they have historically, possibly as a result of increasing average water temperatures. Continued close monitoring of the commercial fishery and life history characteristics of this species is critical to ensure there are no negative impacts to the population as a result of this rule change.

The whitefish season was extended by emergency rule for six days in October 2011. The following table summarizes the harvest and wholesale value of dressed whitefish flesh and whitefish eggs for calendar year 2011, showing the additional harvest made possible by the extended season. The dockside value of the harvest of dressed whitefish is based on an assumed wholesale price of \$1.15/pound. For eggs, the assumed value is \$6.00/pound. Zone 2 fishers benefited the most because a majority of whitefish in Wisconsin waters aggregate to spawn in the waters of Door County.

		Jan 1 – Oct 25 (normal open season)	Oct 26 – Oct 31 (added week)	Dec 1 – Dec 31 (normal open season)
Zone 1	flesh (lbs)	301,562	1,466	8,020
	value	\$346,796	\$1,686	\$9,223
	eggs (lbs)	80	86	0
	value	\$480	\$516	\$0
Zone 2	flesh (lbs)	658,999	103,531	94,174
	value	\$757,849	\$119,061	\$108,300
	eggs (lbs)	9,903	5,801	0
	value	\$59,418.00	\$34,806	\$0
Zone 3	flesh (lbs)	330,566	0	0
	value	\$380,151	\$0	\$0
	eggs (lbs)	0	0	0
	value	\$0	\$0	\$0



For additional information, please contact William Horns, Great Lakes Fisheries Specialist, at William.horns@wisconsin.gov or 266-8782.