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TO: Chris Groth

FROM: Ryan Volenberg

SUBJECT: **FALL FISH RUN REPORT – MANITOWOC, KEWAUNEE, AND DOOR COUNTIES –2007**

OVERALL

This was Warden Ryan Volenberg's fifth fall as the Two Rivers Marine Warden. Again, Volenberg spent much of September and October responding to complaints of violations and enforcing laws related to the fall salmon run.

Wardens Kitt and Trembl again spent a considerable amount of time assisting Volenberg with fish run enforcement efforts. Wardens Stroess, Kratcha, Allen, and Kuhn also helped out on several occasions. Warden Kratcha issued all six of the Door County citations.

2007 was the second fall in which the "new" night fishing prohibition start-date was in effect. This law change made it illegal for anglers to fish Lake Michigan tributaries during the hours of darkness ($\frac{1}{2}$ hour after sunset to $\frac{1}{2}$ hour before sunrise) from September 15th to the first Saturday in May. The new law better coincides with the actual run and will reduce the opportunity for the illegal harvest of salmon and trout. Much of 2006 was spent educating and warning anglers of the new law. In 2007, several citations were issued for violations of the night fishing prohibition between September 15th and October 1st. Overall, however, Volenberg saw a decrease of night fishing violations in 2007.

During the first week of October, Warden Volenberg and the other members of the Marine Enforcement Unit organized and conducted Fish Run Training for the 2007 Warden Recruit class in Kewaunee County. During this training the warden recruits received classroom, scenario, and field training in fish run enforcement. The classroom and scenario training was 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ days in length.

After the warden recruits completed their classroom and scenario training, three were assigned to assist with fish run enforcement in the northeast region while the other four recruit were assigned to assist in the southeast region. Wardens Aaron Gransee, Lance Goette, and Mike Rader worked in Manitowoc and Kewaunee Counties from October 5th thru October 7th. This additional assistance was very much needed and was a good experience for the warden recruits. Gransee, Goette, and Rader did an excellent job and made some good cases.

DNR staff hosted an Open House at the Besadny fisheries facility on the Kewaunee River on Saturday, October 6th. The weather was very nice and a large number of citizens and fishermen attended the event. Included in the open house were guided tours of the facility, activities for children, talks by fisheries staff, and actual demonstrations of processing "spawning" fish.



RiverWatch:

PLAN - Volenberg again organized and implemented "RiverWatch" during the fall of 2007. RiverWatch is a community wardening project Volenberg started in 2004. The goal of RiverWatch is to utilize members of the UW-Stevens Point Student Law Enforcement Association (SLEA) in order to increase the numbers of "eyes and ears" on the tributaries while giving the SLEA members a chance to gain "hands on" experience in the field of conservation law enforcement. The RiverWatch volunteers fish the tributaries at problem locations during the day and set up surveillance to monitor violations of the night fishing prohibition during darkness. There are also opportunities available for RiverWatch volunteers to ride along with Volenberg and other wardens in order to observe how wardens conduct fish run enforcement while in uniform. If the volunteers observe a possible violation, they contact Volenberg or another warden by cellular phone to conduct a follow-up investigation and determine if any enforcement action would be taken. The program took place the weekends of September 30th and October 7th.

RESULTS – A total of 13 members of SLEA participated in the program during the weekends of September 30th and October 7th. As a result of observations made by RiverWatch volunteers and subsequent follow-up investigations by Conservation Wardens, 13 fish run related citations were issued. These are cases that would not otherwise been made if it weren't for the observations made by the RiverWatch volunteers. RiverWatch volunteers also participated in ride-along situations with Wardens Volenberg, Kuhn, and Stroess in which several citations were issued. As in years past, a lot of positive feedback was received from the RiverWatch volunteers as to their experiences with the program. Based upon that positive feedback and the cases that were made as a result of the program, Volenberg believes that RiverWatch 2007 was once again a success. Volenberg plans to continue RiverWatch during the fall of 2008 which will be the 5th anniversary of the program.

Conditions:

Water levels in the rivers and creeks were well below average until later in October when several rain events brought the water levels up for a short period of time. The peak of the run was later than normal. Volenberg estimated that the peak of the salmon run occurred around the third week in October. By this time, the concentration of anglers had dropped considerably for most of the area. Those anglers who were present during this time enjoyed the lack of "competition" with other anglers. The Ahnapee River below the dam in Forestville was the exception as angler concentration during this week was extremely high in response to high numbers of fish stacked up below the dam.

Fishing pressure was below average compared to past years. Volenberg contributes this to increase in gas prices, poor water levels, and lack of fish during the "prime time" of early October.

Problems/Other Comments:

Volenberg again received numerous hotlines and citizen complaints for various fish run related violations. The most common complaint continues to be related to snagging violations. Many legal anglers complain about the lack of enforcement presence. Below is an excerpt from an email Volenberg received as part of a hotline complaint:

"Does the DNR really do something about someone snagging Salmon and keeping them? We fish every weekend near Two Rivers and see sooooooooooooo many snaggers taking the fish home.....And never get caught! Then they laugh when you tell them its an illegal fish. Or the new thing is ...Snag a fish, take out the hook... put it in the mouth and call it GOOD! I'd like to hear you opinion on this. It really makes me mad. We always let

snagged fish go, and only take the ones we get by mouth.”

Volenberg explained the constraints the DNR has with limited warden staffing and increased warden workload. With only three wardens in all of Manitowoc and Kewaunee Counties, it is difficult to maintain an enforcement presence to deter violations.

Wardens continue to make a lot of good cases at night with the aid of night vision. As stated in past fall fish run reports, the only drawback to the night vision goggles we currently have is that there is no magnification. Luckily, Warden Volenberg was able to temporarily borrow a 3X magnification attachment from the Mishicot Police Department for the third year in a row. This simple piece of equipment made an **ENORMOUS** difference, allowing Volenberg to sit back and better observe details and elements of violations he would not have otherwise been able to make. In November, the Manitowoc County Fish and Game Protective Association donated a 3X night vision magnification unit for use by the Wardens working in Manitowoc County. In addition to the fish run, this piece of equipment will be utilized for enforcement of many fish and game activities throughout the entire year. This is just another example of the support that the Manitowoc County Fish and Game Protective Association has shown the warden force over the years. THANK YOU FISH AND GAME!!!

FISH

Chinook Salmon:

As in the past, the Chinook salmon (a.k.a. King Salmon) comprised the vast majority of the fall fish run in Manitowoc and Kewaunee Counties. Fishermen in the harbors were catching salmon as early as late August and early September. However, decent numbers of salmon didn't begin moving up the rivers in numbers until late September. Volenberg noticed that the size of the salmon were smaller than in 2006 and seemed to be consistent with sizes observed in 2005. The most popular spots for catching salmon in Kewaunee and Manitowoc Counties continued to be the Manitowoc River at Manitowoc Rapids; the West Twin River below the dam in Shoto; the East Twin River below the dam in Mishicot and at the bridge crossings at East Hillcrest Road, Maplewood Road, and Steiners Corners Road; the Kewaunee River between CTH F and CTH E, and the Ahnapee River at the bridge crossings on Washington Road and CTH X and below the dam in Forestville.

Coho Salmon:

Volenberg saw more Coho Salmon than in years past and considerably more Coho than in 2006. The majority of the Coho Salmon Volenberg did see were on the Kewaunee River.

Brown Trout:

Once again, Volenberg saw very few Brown Trout caught this fall. Most of the Browns Volenberg did see were caught in the harbors. A Kewaunee angler caught and kept a 36 pound Brown Trout while fishing the inner Kewaunee Harbor.

Rainbow Trout:

Volenberg observed several Rainbow Trout (Steelhead) caught in the rivers this fall which is more than Volenberg had seen in the past. Pier fishing for Rainbows this summer and fall was marginal as compared to past years.

Kewaunee River Buzz Besadny Fish Facility Report (from Mike Baumgartner):

According to the staff at BAFF the fall 2007 trout and salmon run on the Kewaunee River was an average run. Stream conditions were very stressful for the fish with the water being both low and quite warm. Low lake levels, which affects the depth of water in all of the lower river below bare-ass bend, really made it difficult for the migrating fish. Drought conditions, which affects the rest of the river, meant the fish had to struggle another mile or so past the low lake level water to even get to BAFF. Those low water conditions combined with warm water temps caused a good number of the fish to die before they even arrived at BAFF. The ones that did survive the journey were quite stressed and had high levels of the "ick" parasite. The run was on time as usual with below average numbers of chinook (4,100), very high numbers of coho (3,800), and better than average numbers of brown trout (150). Steelhead numbers remained very low (47). Seeforellen transfers to BAFF from the Menominee, Root, and Kewaunee Rivers for the second year were around 350 fish.

BAFF operations in 2007 were changed in a major way and can be summed up in three words, Viral Hemoragic Septicemia. Due to VHS we did not pass any fish upstream and so harvested all fish that entered the facility. On a positive note, we were able to send a higher percentage of the fish we handled to Paul's pantry due to the new fish consumption advisory limits. The length of fish we were able to send to "Paul's" went from any under 32" to any under 36" which meant that instead of sending less than 50% of the fish to "Pauls" we could send more than 70%. For actual numbers, contact Fisheries Biologist Paul Peeters – Sturgeon Bay (no connection with the "Pauls" mentioned earlier). All dead fish and fish not sent to "Paul's" went to Dramm Corporation where they were turned into liquid fish fertilizer to fuel the expanding organic farming industry. All eggs not used for the propagation system were again purchased by Atlas Mikes in Fort Atkinson. The pumps at BAFF ran from October 1st thru December 8.

HIGHLIGHTED CASES:

"Some guys never learn" While working fishing enforcement on the Manitowoc River in Manitowoc Rapids, Warden Volenberg observed an angler whom he recognized as an individual who's hunting and fishing privileges were revoked. Volenberg watched the angler fishing for salmon for about ten minutes and then made contact. As Volenberg was walking down the bank to make contact, the angler turned around and observed Volenberg. The angler then dropped his pole in the water. However, it was too late for the angler. The angler was arrested for fishing during revocation for the third time in three years and for an arrest warrant out of Sheboygan County. Criminal charges are pending. Volenberg seized the angler's pole and waders. Volenberg had cited the angler for illegal possession of a spear in 2004 and again in 2005. The second time resulted in a one-year revocation of his fishing privileges. Volenberg then caught the angler fishing during revocation later in 2005 resulting in additional revocation of his fishing and hunting privileges. Warden Ben Trembl then caught the same angler in the winter of 2007 for fishing with too many lines and fishing during revocation. The angler's response, "I'm addicted to fishing."

"And who says drugs don't cloud your judgment" Warden Kuhn received and investigated a complaint from the Kewaunee County Sheriff's Department late one night regarding potential night fishing activity on the Kewaunee River. With the assistance of Kewaunee County Sheriff's Deputy Eric Zellner, Kuhn was able to locate the suspects. With the aid of his night vision, Kuhn was able to observe the anglers trying to snag, net, and hand grab salmon under the cover of darkness. Kuhn and Zellner observed the two anglers illegally take three salmon. When the Kuhn and Zellner made contact with the illegal fishermen, they discovered that neither angler had the required fishing license nor GL trout/salmon stamp in addition to fishing at night and by

illegal means. A search of the suspects' vehicle revealed a couple of bags of marijuana and various drug paraphernalia. Both anglers were arrested for the drug violations (one of the anglers had previously been convicted of a drug related offense and was also arrested on a probation hold) and cited for fishing at night and for fishing by means other than hook and line. To make matters worse, one of the anglers was arrested for driving with a revoked driver's license when he left the courthouse after his initial appearance.

“Red lights and siren” Wardens Volenberg and Stroess were working nighttime fish run enforcement on the West Twin River in Shoto with the assistance of several RiverWatch volunteers. While attempting to get the RiverWatch volunteers in position to conduct surveillance for the evening, Volenberg observed that there were two fishermen already below the dam in violation of the nighttime fishing prohibition. A passerby saw the group of Wardens and RiverWatch volunteers and mistakenly thought there was a fight taking place. The passerby called the Sheriff's Department and reported the “fight”. Volenberg and the RiverWatch volunteers were able to set up surveillance on the fishermen. A couple minutes later, Volenberg observed several police vehicles with their emergency lights and sirens on converging on their area. Volenberg then observed an officer run to an area near where Volenberg and the others were hiding. Volenberg made contact with the officers and after a brief conversation, explained that there was no fight. As one could imagine, the fishing violators took off after seeing the emergency lights. Luckily, Warden Stroess had relocated the other side of the river and was able to apprehend them before they got away.

“Should have heeded the warning” While working fish run enforcement on the Kewaunee River, Volenberg contacted a group of four anglers who appeared to be fishing legally. After checking their licenses, Volenberg reminded them of the laws regarding snagging and keeping foul hooked fish. The anglers stated they understood the laws and only kept fish hooked in the mouth. A couple days later, Volenberg was again patrolling the Kewaunee River in response to a heavy influx of salmon. Volenberg saw the same group of fishermen. While conducting surveillance for the next two hours, Volenberg observed each of the four anglers keep foul hooked salmon. The anglers were very secretive and were only targeting Coho salmon and would not bother with the Chinook salmon. Volenberg made contact with the anglers and cited each of them for failure to release a foul hooked fish. When asked why they were violating after having the laws explained to them just the other day, they responded they didn't think they would see the warden again.

“From a land far, far away” While working fish run enforcement on the Kewaunee River, Warden Mike Kitt was conducting surveillance on an angler fishing for salmon. Kitt was hidden along the shoreline. The angler was attempting to catch a salmon that was nearby when another angler came walking up. The original angler offered the other angler his spot telling him that there was a salmon just laying there. The second angler declined and stated he was going to fish further down stream. As soon as the second angler left, the first angler looked around to make sure nobody was watching, grabbed the salmon by hand and tossed it up on the shore only feet away from Kitt. Kitt eventually made contact with the angler and cited him for fishing by illegal means. Kitt learned the angler was in the Coast Guard in Puerto Rico and had taken leave to come salmon fishing in Wisconsin with his mother.

CITATIONS ISSUED:

2007 Fall Fish Run Enforcement Log

Violation	Total
Fail to release foul hooked fish	46
Fish without a license	8
Fish without a Great Lakes trout/salmon stamp	2
Snagging	5
Fish Lake Michigan tributaries at night	13
Fish with unauthorized gear	1
Possess fish in excess of the daily bag limit	4
Fish by means other than hook and line	7
Arrest warrant	2
Possession of marijuana	4
Possession of drug paraphernalia	4
Operate motor vehicle while revoked	1
ATV violations	2
Fish after revocation	1
Littering	2
Total	102

Fish Run Enforcement (2003 - 2007)

