

Friday, April 20, 2007

BEGINNING OF A FISH STORY

Holland Sentinel

About 45,000 young salmon are placed in a holding pen, above, in Lake Macatawa near Eldean's Marina Thursday.

The goal is to establish salmon as a part of Michigan sport fishing and tourism. At right, DNR fisheries technician Vince Balcer, left, explains the process of fish stocking to Holland resident Carol Westenbroek, right, and her daughter, Breanna, 11.



About 45,000 young salmon are placed in a holding pen, above, in Lake Macatawa near Eldean's Marina Thursday. The goal is to establish salmon as a part of Michigan sport fishing and tourism. At right, DNR fisheries technician Vince Balcer, left, explains the process of fish stocking to Holland resident Carol Westenbroek, right, and her daughter, Breanna, 11.



Michigan DNR fisheries technician Vince Balcer, left, explains the process of fish stocking to Holland resident Carol Westenbroek, right, and her daughter Breanna, 11, on Thursday afternoon before about 45,000 young salmon are placed in a holding pen in Lake Macatawa near Eldean's Marina. The fish will remain in the pen for about two to four weeks until they smolt, or imprint, on the local waters. The goal is to establish salmon as a part of Michigan sport fishing and tourism.



A close view of some of the 45,000 young salmon that were placed in a holding pen in Lake Macatawa near Eldean's Marina on Thursday afternoon. The fish will remain in the pen for about two to four weeks until they smolt, or imprint, on the local waters. The goal is to establish salmon as a part of Michigan sport fishing and tourism.



Outdoor Discovery Center director Travis Williams installs an informational sign describing the life cycle of salmon next to a pen holding about 45,000 young salmon in Lake Macatawa near Eldean's Marina on Thursday afternoon. The fish will remain in the pen for about two to four weeks until they smolt, or imprint, on the local waters. The goal is to establish salmon as a part of Michigan sport fishing and tourism.

Fishery hopes pinned on salmon fingerlings

Monday, April 23, 2007
Grand Rapids Press

Right now, 45,000 baby Chinook salmon are swimming around in a holding pen in Lake Macatawa waiting to get big enough to survive in Lake Michigan.

In a cooperative effort, the state Department of Natural Resources' Wolf Lake State Fish Hatchery of Mattawan, working with Outdoor Discovery Center of Wildlife Unlimited, last week brought in a tanker full of 3- to 4-inch-long salmon that will call Lake Macatawa home.

In two to four years, they will return to spawn and produce more baby salmon. For now, their home in Lake Macatawa is an 7-by-24-foot floating pen that is 4 feet deep and made of pontoons and netting at Eldean Shipyard Marina, 2223 South Shore Drive. The purpose of the pen is to "give them a safe period of time to grow and imprint on the lake," said Travis Williams, executive director of the Fillmore Township-based Outdoor Discovery Center. "It's so they don't get preyed upon by other fish, turtles and birds."

Among the two dozen people turning out to see the salmon dump Thursday afternoon were Theresa Buhl and her five children. "I home-school them and brought them to see the fish go into the lake as part of their educational experience," she said.

The fish were dumped into the holding pen through an eight-inch-diameter pipe from the truck. "They're just tiny fish. It's hard to believe they're going to grow up to be 3 feet long," she said as about 40 salmon fell out on the sidewalk. The salmon were picked up and returned to the water.

Outdoor Discovery Center staff and volunteers will drop in about five pounds of fish pellets three times daily until the salmon grow to about 8 inches long and migrate into Lake Michigan. The maturing process would allow them to go between freshwater and saltwater, if they were going to live in the ocean. It is the second year Outdoor Discovery Center has put Chinook salmon into Lake Macatawa in conjunction with the DNR. "The hope is that as many as possible will get into Lake Michigan and grow into mature 15- to 20-pound salmon for building the salmon stock and also sport fishing," said Bill Maatman, a fisherman and former Outdoor Discovery Center board member. It is difficult to estimate how many of the salmon might reach maturity because of hazards they face in the lakes, Williams said. "They have to contend with ducks, loons and herons who see them as food in Lake Macatawa. Then, when they get into Lake Michigan, other salmon and trout are out there to eat them," he said.

Harrington K-3 School is partnering with Outdoor Discovery Center to learn more about the life cycle of the fish for science classes, Principal Dan Day said. "It's a great opportunity for the children to see nature at work," he said. Students will raise some of the salmon in aquariums at school to follow their development. Another salmon dump was done in the Kalamazoo River in Saugatuck on Thursday in another DNR-Outdoor Discovery Center partnership a cooperative effort, with Douglas Elementary School an educational partner.

"We're trying to educate the kids and involve the public," Williams said. "From our standpoint, educating people about the fisheries industry is the part that's rewarding to us."

Salmon dumps also were made last week in Grand Haven and South Haven, said Matt Hughes, a Wolf Lake State Fish Hatchery biologist.