

UPSA Cisco Chain Muskie Possession Minimum size Limit Presentation On Fisheries Order 206

Who is UPSA – Upper Peninsula Sportsmen Alliance

Represents 50 Clubs and Organizations with ties to the U.P.

Over 50,000 Members

Upper Peninsula Sportsmen's Alliance

Hi, my name is Floyd Dropps. I'm here representing the Upper Peninsula Sportsmen's Alliance. We represent over 50 clubs and organizations with ties to the U.P. On behalf of UPSA I would like to Thank You for allowing us to present our views on the proposed changes to the Muskie size limit for the Cisco Chain of Lakes.

Change Request to Fisheries Order 206

The Michigan DNR is requesting the NRC to approve a change to the Cisco Chain of Lakes.

The Cisco Chain is a chain of 15 lakes in Gogebic County. Three of those lakes are partially in Wisconsin. Those 3 Lakes have a 50 Inch minimum size limit for muskie, which aligns with Wisconsin's 50-inch minimum size limit. States like to maintain consistent regulations at borders.

Twelve of the 15 Lakes are entirely in Michigan, and have a 42-inch minimum size limit.

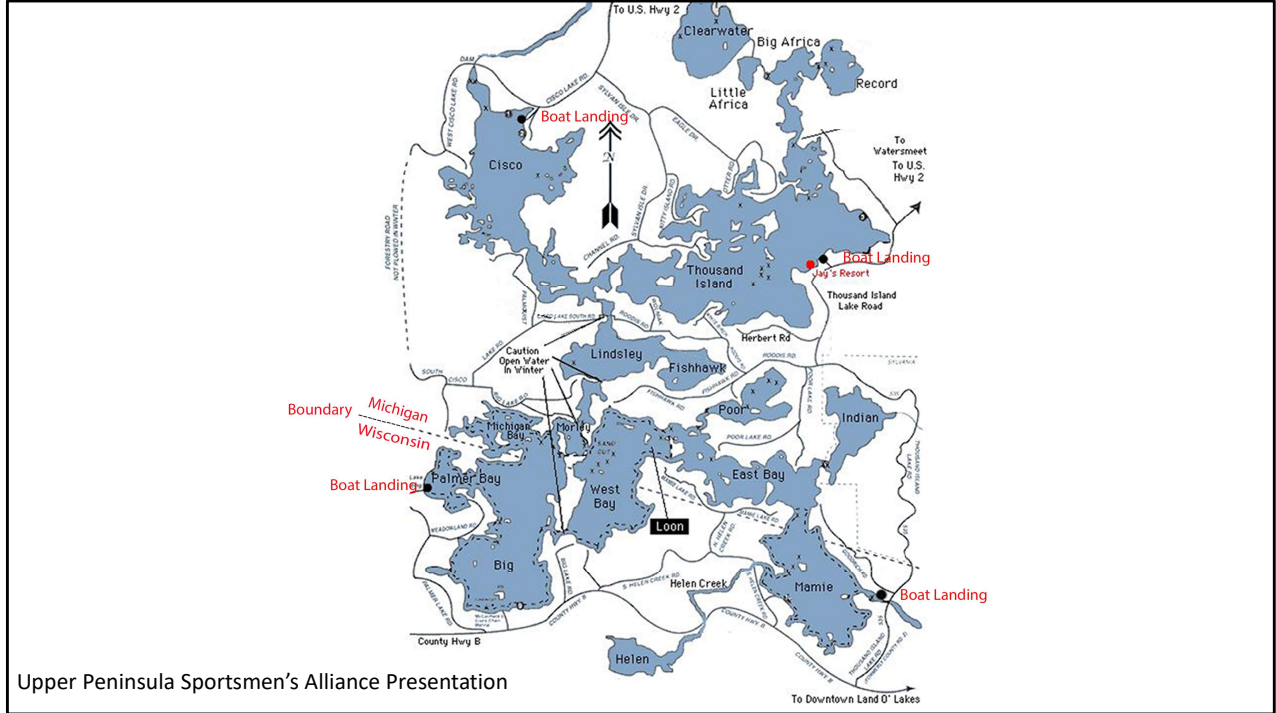
If the change to Fisheries Order 206 is approved, the 12 Lakes entirely in Michigan on the Cisco Chain would also be changed to a Fifty-inch minimum size.

The DNR States: Anglers not familiar with what lakes are included within the Wisconsin Boundary regulations, are confused as to the possession Minimum Size Limit for the Michigan Waters of this lake chain.

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Now that a lot to swallow, so lets just take a look at the lake map and see if it makes more sense.



Fifteen Lakes In the Cisco Chain, over 4,000 acres of water, three of the lakes border Wisconsin, 12 of the lakes do not share a border with Wisconsin, 4 Marked Boat Landings, two of these on the three border lakes. To get an idea of distance between lakes Big Lake is 771 acres and Mamie is 400 acres.

One of the major reasons listed for changing the remaining 12 lakes to a 50 inch minimum size is that it is too difficult to tell which lake a person is on, so make them all 50 inches. Now I'm no Daniel Boone, my buddy gave me a special compass, it doesn't have a needle to point north, instead it has a mirror to show who is lost. But even I can manage to find my way around a lake chain with a map, and most people nowadays have built-in maps on their fish locator/GPS units. (Point out map details) And if you want to fish one of the three lakes with the 50 inch size limit, two of them have boat landings. We expect hunters in the woods to know their location which to me requires a lot more effort, than determining if you are crossing into one of the three border lakes of this chain. So How did these different minimum size limits come about.

How Michigan's One Muskie per Year Regulation Became a Reality

2012 DNR's Warm Water Steering Committee gets share holders to table to discuss issue.

Some user groups want to never kill or keep a muskie as it will hurt fishery.

Other user groups want to be able to keep a trophy or an occasional fish.

DNR Recommendation was to allow only one fish per year at 42 inch minimum. This would meet the goals of both an occasional fish being kept while protecting the fishery and allowing the fish to grow larger.

Warm Water Steering Committee members agreed to support new proposal.

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Michigan fisherman/Stakeholders were all over the board on muskies in 2012. The DNR has a warm water steering committee that gives a voice to various groups of fishermen. Representatives for various groups become members of the warm water steering committee. They have the DNR's ear and advocate for their peers and fellow club members.

Some groups wanted no muskie ever to be killed or kept, other groups thought it was okay to keep a trophy or an occasional fish.

I commend the compromise and sacrifice of everyone involved, that help too establish the outcome. The Fisheries Division and individuals and clubs members serving on the committee all deserve our appreciation.

Michigan got a very conservative regulation which still allows for an occasional fish to be kept, while still protecting the resource.

Regulation Changes

2013 The change from one muskie per day to one per year was implemented.

2017 The DNR reviewed lakes they thought could grow larger muskies. The Cisco chain was not on that list. The Three Cisco Chain border lakes had a 40 Inch MSL to align with Wisconsin's border water regulations.

2018 The DNR increased the minimum size limit on select lakes they thought feasible for a larger minimum size. A Few lakes went to 46 inches and a very few to 50 inches. This did not include the Cisco Chain. FO-205-18 changed the three border water Lakes to align with the rest of Michigan's 42 inch minimum size.

2020 The DNR went along with the State of Wisconsin to change the Boundary water muskie minimum size limit to 50 inches. Wisconsin allows one fish a day vs the Michigan limit of one fish a year. In other words Wisconsin uses a different mechanism than Michigan to limit muskie take.

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The DNR can't just mandate a larger minimum size limit on a lake and expect all the fish to grow bigger. Very few U.P. lakes have the ideal conditions to grow muskies much larger than 42 inches. Most males never do, it's only some of the fast growing female that reach over 42 inches. My point is that we are dealing with only a small percentage of the fish.

It would be like saying only fourteen point bucks should be legal. Yes there are 14 point bucks and you might get one in hunting season, but should you set the bar that high for everyone and ignore the possibility that maybe a nice 10 point buck is still a trophy to most people. To me the same thing applies to muskie, maybe there is a 50 inch muskie but their numbers will remain quite small due to limitations other than age. The 50 inch minimum size is essentially changing the regulation to a catch and release fishery. The choice is being removed from the individual to decide what is a trophy or if they can keep a trophy. The trade off to one fish a year that sportsmen agreed to is being taken away.

Reasons to Leave Current Regulations in Place

Honor the agreement to sportsmen - stake holders, to share resource by keeping current 42-inch minimum size, and changing possession limit from one muskie per day to one muskie per year. Changing this to 50 inch minimum size would effectively make it a catch a release fishery.

The majority of the lakes are well defined as to location. Fisherman like hunters are required to know their physical location, and regulations.

Modifying this chain of lakes to a 50 inch minimum size, may actually cause increased fishing pressure on the lake, and more fish could be killed by more handling of fish than lost by current regulations.

Since mandatory reporting of any kept muskies has been in place since 2018, no reports have been made for the Cisco Chain of Lakes. (Per Cory Kovaks, DNR Fisheries Biologist & contact for reporting) An average of only 30 Muskies per year have been reported for the whole state of Michigan. Why fix what's not broken.

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Thank You for the opportunity to present UPSA's viewpoint on this issue.

Are there any questions?