

MCTU Conservation Agenda: As of January 20, 2007

## **Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited 2006 Conservation Agenda**

Approved June 17, 2006

Amended January 20, 2007

This version of MCTU's Conservation Agenda replaces  
and supersedes all previous Conservation Agendas or Policies.

*Conservation Committee: Oversee/coordinate updating the Council's Conservation Agenda, coordinate Legislative Day with the Executive Director and review/make recommendations to the Council on advocacy/legal positions relating to natural resource issues. MCTU Bylaws (as revised September 17, 2005), V.II.B.*

### **MCTU POLICY POSITIONS**

The policy positions set forth herein are those approved by the Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited, and are to be implemented pursuant to the methods approved by, and in the order of priority established by, the Council to ensure adequate clean, clear, cold water for fisheries. These policy positions will be implemented primarily through seeking appropriate legislation, regulations, management priorities and enforcement. The Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited recognizes that there are coldwater resources within the State of Michigan that are so unique and precious that any level of development, resource use or water withdrawal is inappropriate.

#### **WATER USE POLICY**

**Interbasin Transfer of Water:** The Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited is opposed to the bulk transport of water from the Great Lakes Basin to locations outside the basin. MCTU opposes any withdrawal or diversion of ground or surface water that will adversely impact the flow or temperature regime of any coldwater lake or stream in Michigan.

**Water Withdrawal:** The Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited supports the ongoing review and modification of Michigan's statutory regime for the regulation of water withdrawals to ensure the continued protection and improvement of coldwater fisheries and their watersheds.

#### **DAMS, IMPOUNDMENTS AND BARRIERS**

**Dam Removal and Modification:** The Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited supports the removal or modification of dams on Michigan's coldwater watersheds that will improve hydrologic or thermal regimes and coldwater habitat. However, on those rivers where the dams act as barriers to migratory salmonid or nuisance aquatic invasive species, we will weigh scientific and social concerns before supporting or opposing dam removal or modification or fish passage.

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**Hydropower Dam Relicensing:** The Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited supports the ongoing efforts of the Michigan Hydro-Relicensing Coalition to gain recognition and accommodation of coldwater fisheries needs in the negotiation of licenses for dams in Michigan regulated by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, and monitoring the implementation of those licenses when granted. Attention will be paid to improving flow regimes, water quality, temperature regimes and fish passage at federally regulated and other dams.

**Nuisance Species Barriers:** The Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited supports the use of appropriate means to block aquatic nuisance species or other undesirable introduced species from impairing coldwater fisheries, their watersheds and the Great Lakes.

### **WILD FISHERIES CONSERVATION**

**Recoverable Native Coldwater Species:** The Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited supports both management efforts and funding from state and federal authorities to conduct research, undertake management programs, and issue special regulations to achieve the reintroduction or restoration of coldwater species native to Michigan.

**Game and Fish Protection Fund and Game and Fish Protection Trust Fund:** The Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited supports modifications to the Game and Fish Protection Fund and the Game and Fish Protection Trust Fund, including changes to collect revenue from user groups who do not purchase hunting and fishing licenses, and modification of the Game and Fish Protection Trust Fund to utilize revenue and reserves to restore fish and game habitat. MCTU does not support diverting revenues from the Game and Fish Protection Trust Fund to pay MDNR operating expenses.

**Aquatic Nuisance Species:** The Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited supports the goal of eliminating aquatic nuisance species that may impair coldwater resources in the State of Michigan and the Great Lakes region. In particular, it encourages the passage of legislation to prevent the importation of exotic species.

**Aquatic Species Conservation Act:** The Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited supports passage of legislation that will further the scientific management of coldwater resources and allow the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to protect the public trust in coldwater resources. Any such legislation must provide for public input and oversight, rather than vesting the sole authority for such management in the Director of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

**Stocking Practices:** The Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited supports the natural reproduction of coldwater species where feasible, and encourages the State of Michigan to limit the stocking of streams if and when sustainable natural reproduction is established.

## **GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS**

**Public Participation:** The Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited believes public involvement in Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and Michigan Department of Natural Resources decision-making processes is critical, and supports legislation that provides an opportunity for notice, comments and public hearings whenever a proposed use of land or natural resources may negatively affect coldwater fisheries. The Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited believes that it is critical that the MDEQ and MDNR achieve more consistent interagency coordination and cooperation in regulation of coldwater resources.

**Treaty Rights and Resource Management:** The Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited supports the efforts of the State of Michigan and the United States to negotiate for the protection of our state's natural resources.

## **RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

**Coldwater Resource Regulations:** The Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited supports the ongoing review and modification of Michigan's regulations related to the scientific management of coldwater fisheries and resources to ensure their protection and restoration, and to ensure a broad range of recreational opportunities for the users of those resources.

**Coldwater Habitat Preservation and Restoration:** The Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited will seek legislative and executive branch support for expanded coldwater habitat preservation and restoration programs in Michigan, including the appropriation of additional funds dedicated to habitat preservation, restoration and improvement.

**Land Use Planning:** The Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited supports efforts at regional and watershed based land use planning efforts which result in the recognition of the role and function of coldwater systems and undertake efforts to protect those systems.

**Natural Rivers Act:** The Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited supports the expansion of the Natural Rivers Program and designation of rivers under the program when such designation will contribute to coldwater habitat protection and restoration efforts.

**Fisheries Habitat Restoration Project Permit Fees:** The Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited supports legislation that would recognize the significant contribution to Michigan's communities and citizens made by non-profit organizations engaged in habitat restoration work, and which would create a new permit fee structure which would not

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place as large an administrative and financial burden on groups undertaking such projects for the public good.

## **POLLUTION PREVENTION**

**Non-Point Source Pollution:** The Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited supports the passage of legislation that reduces the impact that non-point source runoff has on coldwater resources.

**Drain Code:** The Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited supports improvements to the Michigan Drain Code that will restrict the construction, alteration or channelization of drains where doing so would impair coldwater fisheries and their watersheds.

**Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (“CAFOs”):** The Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited will adopt the following concepts as part of its Conservation Agenda and the MCTU Chair and Executive Director will encourage the Michigan Department of Agriculture to adopt as part of their Generally Accepted Agricultural Management Practices (GAAMP’s).

1. The spreading of liquid manure at any time of the year should be evaluated by a risk assessment tool that includes the following risk factors:
  - Slope of land
  - Proximity to surface water
  - Tile drainage system
  - Soil type and conditions
  - Immediate weather forecast (24 hours)
  - Presence of crop residue
  - Method of application
  - Type of manure
  
2. The goal of this risk assessment tool is to ensure that spread manure remains in the fields; and protects public waters by reducing the risk of accidental manure and nutrient run-off.

## **MINERAL EXPLOITATION**

**Mining:** The Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited opposes the permitting of surface or underground mining in all instances unless and until appropriate safeguards are in place to protect cold water fisheries from potential damage.

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**Severed Mineral Rights:** The Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited strongly encourages the State of Michigan and the United States Government to develop a mineral rights exchange program that will allow for the reunification of publicly held mineral rights and surface ownership within the same body of government.

**Gas and Oil Exploration:** The Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited opposes the exploration, development, production and remediation of contamination that could have a negative impact on coldwater fisheries and their watersheds unless and until appropriate safeguards are in place to protect those fisheries and their watersheds from potential damage.