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CREWS TO REMOVE HARMFUL INVASIVE SEA LAMPREYS FROM LAKE HURON'S SAGINAW RIVER WATERSHED

***Open house about sea lamprey control in Tittabawassee River tributaries scheduled for April 17;
Sea lamprey control treatment to take place May 9-18***

BEAVERTON, EDENVILLE, AND MIDLAND — Sea lamprey control experts will remove harmful, invasive sea lampreys from sections of Lake Huron's Saginaw River watershed in eastern Michigan starting May 9, 2023. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), under contract with the bi-national Great Lakes Fishery Commission (GLFC), will carry out the control measures. On April 17, from 5-7 pm at the Beaverton Activity Center, prior to the upcoming treatment efforts, sea lamprey control experts from both GLFC and USFWS will be holding an open-house information session to introduce and talk about sea lampreys and the removal effort in the affected tributaries – Tobacco River, Little Molasses River and Black Creek.

Sea lampreys can decimate native and desirable Great Lakes fishes and significantly harm the ecosystem and the economy. Following the 2020 disaster during which both the Edenville and Sanford dams on the Tittabawassee River failed, tributaries upstream of Sanford Dam were found to contain invasive sea lamprey populations. The failure of these dams not only caused catastrophic flooding downstream but also allowed sea lampreys to migrate upstream to sections of the river system they previously could not reach. Prior to May 2020, the Sanford Dam was the lowest barrier preventing the upstream migration of spawning sea lampreys from Lake Huron, and the Edenville Dam served as a secondary blocking structure. Three tributaries of the Tittabawassee River —Tobacco River, Little Molasses River, and Black Creek—are scheduled for sea lamprey control treatments starting on May 9, 2023. Sea lamprey control treatments have never occurred on these tributaries *upstream* of Sanford Dam. Between May 9 and 18, Carrol Creek, another tributary to the Tittabawassee River, located *downstream* of the Sanford Dam site, will also be treated. Carrol Creek underwent its last successful lampricide treatment in 2017.

- **A community open house to discuss the treatments of Tittabawassee tributaries will occur on April 17th from 5-7 pm at the Beaverton Activity Center, in the city of Beaverton, MI.**
- **Sea lamprey control will take place approximately May 9th to May 18th at various tributaries within the Saginaw River watershed, upstream of Edenville and Sanford dams.**

Sea lampreys, native to the Atlantic Ocean, are invasive to the Great Lakes. They entered the basin through shipping canals and were first seen in Lake Erie in November 1921, Lake Michigan in 1936, Lake Huron in 1937, and Lake Superior in 1938. Sea lampreys spawn in streams once and then die. Their offspring live as harmless larvae in river bottoms for several years before the larvae transform into parasitic adults and migrate to the open lake. In the lake, sea lampreys spend about 18 months feeding on fishes' body fluids using a large suction-cup mouth filled with sharp, horn-shaped teeth surrounding a razor-sharp rasping tongue. Each sea lamprey is capable of killing up to 40 pounds (18kg) of fish.

Sea lampreys prey upon a wide variety of Lake Huron fishes including lake trout, salmon, steelhead, smallmouth bass, walleye, yellow perch, whitefish, and even sturgeon. Within a few decades of their invasion, sea lampreys had

colonized all areas of the Great Lakes basin and caused major economic losses. They also contributed to significant ecosystem disruption.

The sea lamprey control program is a highly coordinated effort between the United States and Canada. The program was established by the Convention on Great Lakes Fisheries of 1954, a treaty between the two nations. Since 1958, the program has used the lampricide TFM to control sea lamprey in the Great Lakes. TFM was discovered in 1957 after more than 6,000 compounds were tested to uncover a selective sea lamprey control method. TFM is fully registered with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and with Health Canada as a safe and effective pesticide. Licensed and trained technicians apply TFM in streams to remove sea lamprey larvae. TFM does not pose a risk to human health or the environment when applied at concentrations necessary to control larval sea lampreys. It naturally breaks down in the environment and does not accumulate in the tissues of fish.

As with any pesticide, the public is advised to use discretion and minimize unnecessary exposure. Lampricides are selectively toxic to lampreys, but some fish, insects, and broadleaf plants are sensitive. Persons confining baitfish or other organisms in stream water are advised to use an alternate water source because lampricides may cause mortality among aquatic organisms stressed by crowding and handling. Agricultural irrigation must be suspended for 24 hours, during and following a treatment. Along with TFM, the sea lamprey control program uses barriers and traps to control sea lamprey populations in the Great Lakes.

“Lake Huron supports a world class fishery and is incredibly valuable to the people of the United States and Canada,” said Jim McKane, chair of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission. “On the U.S. side alone, the Lake Huron fishery generates more than \$800 million annually in economic activity. The success of the fishery depends on ongoing sea lamprey control.”

“Along with lampricides, barriers are an important tool in the sea lamprey control toolbox,” McKane continued. “The need to treat these systems that were previously untouched by sea lampreys underscores the importance of maintaining a network of safe and reliable structures throughout the basin.”

“Our decades of experience enable us to be responsive and precise as possible in our treatments,” said Chuck Traxler, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Acting Midwest Regional Director. “The events that gave sea lampreys access to these previously untouched areas were devastating. By adding these first-time treatments to our schedule, we are working to manage populations of larval sea lamprey to support healthy ecosystems after they were severely disrupted. We appreciate the support of the state and provincial natural resource agencies, and the community, as we carry out these control measures that are so critical to the health of Lake Huron.”

“Sea lamprey control is highly precise and based on the particular conditions of each river we treat,” said Jenna Tews, USFWS Ludington Biological Station Supervisor. “Each treatment is different in terms of stream chemistry, geography, water level, and weather. Often, conditions change after a treatment has begun. We are ready for those changes. Using mobile laboratories, we constantly monitor the stream chemistry at multiple sites throughout each treatment and make adjustments accordingly. We can remove tens of thousands of lamprey larvae from streams and protect hundreds of thousands of fish in Lake Huron that otherwise would have met an unnatural and premature death.”

The Great Lakes Fishery Commission is an international organization established by the United States and Canada through the 1954 Convention on Great Lakes Fisheries. The commission has the responsibility to support fisheries research, control the invasive sea lamprey, and facilitate cross-border management. Visit www.glf.org

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit fws.gov.