

Newsletter of the Chippewa Ottawa Resource Authority, 'Conserving for Future Generations'

JEFF PARKER COMES ON BOARD AS FAITH MCGRUTHER RETIRES



Faith McGruther

Longtime executive director retires

Faith McGruther, 65 this June, longtime executive director of the Chippewa Ottawa Treaty Fishery Management Authority, has retired.

"It's the right time to retire — right at the beginning of a new cycle," the Sault Tribe member said. "It's better for Jeff Parker to come in at the beginning. The inland phase is perfect time, a break in the cycle."

She added that Parker will bring fresh ideas and outlooks that the job needs.

McGruther grew up in Sault Ste. Marie and raised three children who all live in Chippewa County. She has a host of grandkids and one great granddaughter.

Working as secretary to the Sault Tribe Board of Directors led McGruther to COTFMA. She took minutes for all the committees, including the Conservation Committee. She often carpooled with Sault Tribe Attorney Dan Green, and they talked a lot about fishing.

"At that time, Big Abe's case was in court," she said. "I asked a lot of questions."

She began moving more and more into fishery work. It became part of her job to issue fishing licenses, which gave her the opportunity to get to know many fishermen. She helped Sault Tribe attorneys with a study they were preparing for court, which they ended up not using because they negotiated the 1985 settlement. But it afforded Faith the opportunity to go to fishers homes and get to know them and their families, and their lives.

Fishery concerns kept growing. McGruther began take minutes for the organization that evolved into COTFMA. At first, the group was meeting to work on the court case. As negotiations evolved, the Management Authority evolved, with paid positions. She was hired as administrative assistant to an executive director who didn't work out. They decided to give Faith a chance, and gave her the directorship around 1987.

COTFMA staff moved into the Big Abe Building with ITFAP staff. The

building had been purchased with settlement monies. There were three of them in the front, including McGruther and Jane TenEyck.

McGruther is glad for the experience. Her position gave her opportunities to go places, meet people and see things she would never have otherwise.

She was named to the national Aquatic Species Task Force. Zebra mussels were becoming a problem. Senators proposed control measures that included an Aquatic Species Task Force. COTFMA and GLIFWC were requested to submit letters of interest to sit on the task force. She felt that because she was already involved with NAFWS, which was desirable, she was chosen, and GLIFWC served as alternate.

At the group's second meeting, she met a gentleman from the Duluth-St. Louis Harbor who called the ruffe, "The Beast." She learned that the ruffe ate whitefish eggs. McGruther was concerned about the future of Native fishing if ruffe spread so she volunteered for the Ruffe Control Committee and served on it until her retirement.

The Ruffe Committee developed a control plan. They concluded that they could not eradicate the ruffe but they managed to control its spread. They worked with the shipping industry to get ships to exchange ballast out in deep water.

In 1990, The Native American Fish and Wildlife Society invited her to make a presentation about the 1985 Consent Order. She became a NAFWS member and developed a close friendship with Regional Director Pat Sagovec. They were the only two women in similar positions, so they were pretty unique. Sagovec was diagnosed with cancer and slipped away quickly. McGruther was very surprised to be elected to take Sagovec's place.

McGruther believes in the Society.

"It's a grassroots organization; fish and natural resource people use meetings to interact and exchange ideas. It brings together people who wouldn't normally come together and provides conservation officer training, environmental training," she said.

She is still involved in the Society, serving her second term on the Executive Committee as secretary/treasurer. Depending on how she feels, she may run again in September. In 2003, the national conference will take place in the Great Lakes Region, and it is Michigan's turn. She would like to see that through.

She also serves on the Sault Tribe's Elderly Committee and Child Welfare Committee, and she would like to join the Conservation Committee. Although she has fishery expertise, she is not as experienced with gathering and hunting. But, her time with the Society and the Task Force has afforded her plenty of the experience with lobbying and working with other governments, organizations and agencies.



Jeff Parker

CORA gets new executive director

Jeff Parker has been hired as Chippewa Ottawa Resource Authority executive director. He replaces COTFMA and CORA's longtime executive director, Faith McGruther, who recently retired. He was hired by the CORA board late February and came on board March 5.

"It's been enjoyable so far," Parker said. "The staff is good, knowledgeable, and understand their jobs." In his first two weeks, he has been concentrating on securing additional funding for tribal programs, he added.

Parker, 43, is no stranger to either administration or tribal fishery issues. He comes to the job following a 12-year stint at the helm of Bay Mills Indian Community as its tribal chairman. Before that, he served as the tribe's Housing Authority executive director. As BMIC chairman, he sat on the COTFMA board of directors and was a key player in the success of the negotiations to replace the 15-year Consent Order of 1985, which culminated in seven governments and U.S. District Court Judge Richard Enslin meeting at Bay Mills Indian Community to sign the 2000 Consent Decree. After the new agreement was signed and COTFMA evolved into CORA, Parker was elected chairman of the CORA board.

In 2001, Parker was honored with the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society Tribal Leader of the Year award.

As executive director of CORA, Parker will be dealing with one issue for all the 1836 treaty tribes. "When at Bay Mills, I enjoyed working with other tribes to protect treaty rights, and in the development and growth of treaty rights," he said. "This job allows me to continue to do that — not so much in a policy- and decision-making capacity, but in a facilitatory position."

The new CORA executive director grew up on Bay Mills Indian Reservation and naturally developed an understanding of the significance of fishing to the Bay Mills people. Having lived through the court decisions, as a young man he understood the importance of treaty rights and retention. Today, he knows that the collective rights of the tribes to regulate the treaty fishery is just as important.

Parker wants to make sure that tribal fishers maintain their livelihood. He sees his biggest immediate challenge as securing additional funding.

Two tribes new to CORA — Little River and Little Traverse Bay Bands, which were reaffirmed in 1994, need base funding. And, Bay Mills, Sault Tribe and Grand Traverse Band all need additional base funding. "The biggest challenge is funding," he said. "Not only for tribal programs, but also for marketing and development of the fish."

The additional monies are needed to adequately manage and regulate the treaty fishery, said Parker. "The 2000 Consent Decree really established a new paradigm in the management of fish stocks in the Great Lakes. We moved from quota TAC (total allowable catch) system to a more flexible system that is effort-based, and that requires additional funding to ensure we have all the information we need to implement it," he said.

"It's the cornerstone of 2000 Consent Decree — and the biggest challenge," he added. Parker's concern for adequate funding applies to both the short view and the long view — without it, "we may lose the right to self-regulate."

In the long term, Parker's goal is not so much management and regulation, but "more into new markets and the ability to add value to commercial fish harvest," he said. Also of future concern to the CORA executive director is the potential impact of exotic species and other water quality and habitat concerns such as water diversions and pollution.

Parker fired out his other objectives:

To work with the tribes to establish new markets for tribal harvest;

To develop workshops and training sessions for the tribes, to help them with their new roles and responsibilities under the 2000 Consent Decree;

To look for non-traditional funding (private sources, for example) sources for tribes' management responsibilities and to develop the commercial fishery;

To assist tribes to develop existing programs—whether its biological or public information and education;

To make sure tribal interests are properly represented under various inter-governmental agencies that are involved in management of the Great Lakes; and,

To oversee day-to-day operations.

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www.1836cora.org



SETTLEMENT WORDING REKINDLES BATTLE

Jacques LeBlanc talks to the Associated Press

By John Flesher
Associated Press Writer

MUNISING, Mich. (AP) — Jacques LeBlanc vividly remembers those scary nights in the early 1980s, when gunfire sometimes rang out as he placed fishing nets in the upper Great Lakes.

American Indian commercial fishermen such as LeBlanc were locked in a bitter dispute with sport anglers, who claimed tribal nets were snagging more than their fair share of the catch.

“We’d work at night to try and avoid attention,” said LeBlanc, a member of the Bay Mills Indian Community in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. “You’d be out in your boat and hear the shots. Or people would run at you and veer off at the last minute.”

Tempers calmed when a federal judge approved a settlement in 1985. Now they’re flaring again in Munising, a Lake Superior shoreline town of 2,500, and LeBlanc is a target once more.

It started in fall 2000, shortly after Bay Mills and four other tribes signed a 20-year revision of the pact with the state.

No one seems to know how, but provisions wound up in the 75-page document that opened Munising Bay to Indian commercial fishing — which had been prohibited there for more than seven decades.

The bay extends about five miles north from its namesake town before reaching Superior’s open waters. Sport anglers flock there in pursuit of steelhead trout, coho salmon and whitefish.

Jim Ekdahl, a Department of Natural Resources field deputy who represented Michigan in the negotiations, insists the new policy slipped into the compact by mistake as attorneys sent drafts back and forth.

“I’ve been scratching my head, as we all have been,” he said.

Tribal representatives say opening Munising Bay was among concessions they sought and a key reason for accepting the deal. The bay usually freezes in winter, permitting ice fishing — a safer alternative to the open lakes, with their floating ice slabs and other hazards, LeBlanc says.

“It’s no glitch,” he said at home on the Bay Mills reservation, about 100 miles east of the bay. “You can’t tell me all those people overlooked it.”

Many anglers agree, claiming the state sold them out to get a deal and now feigns ignorance. Either way, they want it changed, saying Indian crews will overfish the bay. Tribal biologists deny that.

“What kind of a country do we live in where the government admits they messed up but says, ‘Oh, well, ho hum, there’s nothing we can do?’” says Doug Miron, chairman of the Munising Bay Fish Committee, which is exploring a legal challenge.

Ekdahl has approached the tribes about amending the pact, but says they’ve shown little interest. For now, matters are stalled — and sport anglers are growing more frustrated.

“The DNR’s got to do something ... or the fishery as we know it will be depleted,”

Miron said.

Dave Menominee, another Bay Mills fisherman, says his crew was first to take advantage of the bay’s new status, spending a week there in late 2000. Local anglers “gave us a little hassle” but no big problems, he said.

But in January 2001, LeBlanc and several helpers hauled gill nets onto the frozen bay. They cut holes and placed about 4,700 feet of netting below the ice.

That night, vandals severed 14 surface lines attached to the nets — which could have allowed them to drift indefinitely, snagging and suffocating fish. The Indians managed to retrieve the netting but the culprits were never caught.

LeBlanc says there was “talk around town ... they were going to burn my truck, my snowmobiles, they were going to shoot at me from the hills” overlooking the bay. Still, he continued fishing for several weeks with a police escort.

Anglers say the threats went both ways. “They said if we kept cutting their nets they’d bring the whole tribe up here and put their nets all around our fishing shanties,” said Troy Passinault of Munising.

At a tense public forum, LeBlanc assured skeptical anglers he wasn’t trying to ruin their prized fishing spot. But he refused to stay out of the bay while officials tried to sort things out.

“I asked them if they’d be willing to quit their jobs until this was settled and they say they couldn’t do that,” LeBlanc said. “Well, this is my job.”

He hasn’t returned to Munising this winter, because unusually mild temperatures have prevented ice from forming. Crews from other tribes apparently have steered clear as well.

Their absence has prevented more flare-ups, but the peace may be temporary.

LeBlanc and Menominee say they’ll be back — weather permitting, and if they decide it’s economically worthwhile. Miron says his group is equally determined to stop them, although it condemns vandalism or violence and considers the state more of a foe than the Indians.

Miron contends federal regulations allow revision of the agreement to restore Munising Bay’s previous status, if the state would try. Ekdahl says the only way to make the change is to reopen negotiations with the tribes — and he acknowledges having few bargaining chips.

The bay isn’t a prime commercial fishing

area, he says; it has a limited population of whitefish, which tribal operators prefer. And he doubts tribal fishing will deplete the bay’s other species that are more popular with anglers.

Bill Belen, a local sportsman, doesn’t buy it.

“You let them start gill netting in here and there won’t be anything left for us,” the 40-year-old said, pulling his boat ashore on a gray, chilly morning.

The gill net, which resembles an oversized tennis net, is a sore point for sport fishermen. They liken it to a vacuum cleaner that sucks up everything within reach, indiscriminately killing fish — including those tribal fishers don’t want.

Defenders say the complaint is outdated. By choosing locations, water depths and mesh sizes, today’s gill netters can target specific fish types. Modern netting is made of monofilament, easier for sport fish such as salmon and walleye to break than yesterday’s nylon was, LeBlanc says.

But the quarrel involves more than fishing methods. It’s also a cultural clash, part of a long-running debate over tribal sovereignty and whether 19th Century treaties are relevant in the modern world.

LeBlanc’s father, the late Albert “Big Abe” LeBlanc, is a legendary figure around Bay Mills. His challenge of the state’s authority to restrict tribal fishing prompted court rulings that upheld Indian treaty rights and led to the 1985 settlement.

“I often think of my dad when I’m on the lake; I guess it’s where I connect with him,” says Jacques LeBlanc, 38. “I’m not trying to pick a fight with anybody. But when I’m out there using gill nets, I’m exercising the rights he fought for.”

There might be easier ways to make a living, he acknowledges. “But I’m a fisherman, it’s all I want to be. I’d love to pass it on to my boys.”

Anglers are equally passionate. Passinault, 26, is a lifelong sport fisherman and has lots of time for it since getting laid off from his factory job.

“This is all I do,” he said after a recent outing on Munising Bay. “If they take that away from me, what’s left? I know they have rights, but when they come off the reservation they ought to abide by our rules.”

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On the Net:

Copy of 2000 fishing compact:
<http://www.1836cora.org>

Chippewa Ottawa Resource Authority

CORA Board, Officers and Committee officers

Bay Mills Indian Community (BMIC or Bay Mills)
L. John Lufkins, tribal chairman, CORA vice chairman
Dave Menominee, Conservation Committee chairman

Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians (GTB)
Robert Kewaygoshkum, tribal chairman
John Concannon, Natural Resource Committee chairman

Little River Band of Ottawa Indians (LRB)
Bob Guenthardt, tribal chairman, CORA chairman
John Koon, Natural Resource Commission chairman

Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa Indians (LTBB)
Gerry Chingwa, tribal chairman, GLRC* vice chairman
George Anthony, Natural Resource Commission chairman

Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians (Sault Tribe or SSMTCI)
Bernard Bouschor, tribal chairman; Alternate: Fred Paquin, Tribal Unit 3 director, Chief of Police, Law Enforcement Committee
Vic Matson Sr., Conservation Committee Chairman, GLRC chairman

* “Great Lakes Resource Committee,” which serves as the inter-tribal management body for the treaty fishery in 1836 treaty waters.

Chippewa Ottawa Resource Authority

Albert “Big Abe” LeBlanc Building
179 W. Three Mile Rd.
Sault Ste. Marie MI 49783
Ph: 906-632-0043 Fax: 906-632-1141
e-mail: cora@up.net
website: www.1836cora.org

CORA staff

Jeff Parker, executive director
Jane Teneyck, assistant executive director
Dwight “Bucko” Teeple, resource developer
Bev Aikens, executive secretary
Deanna Bowen, secretary

2002 winter bald eagle survey results for lower Michigan:

LANSING—Department of Natural Resources officials today announced results of the 2002 winter bald eagle survey, which produced 990 reported sightings from 1,021 voluntary eagle spotters in 69 Michigan counties. This year’s survey period, Jan. 1-15, occurred during unseasonably warm weather with ice-free waters.

Three hundred forty-four eagles were sighted in the Upper Peninsula, 324 were counted in the southern Lower Peninsula and 322 eagles were sighted in the northern Lower Peninsula. Within specific counties, high sightings were reported in Monroe (70), Midland (58) and Chippewa counties (59). Many eagles were reported at or near cooling ponds and along open waterways.

The DNR and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service wish to thank those individuals who participated in this project. This annual survey is a valuable management tool that aids in maintaining an informational database about bald eagles, which are listed as a threatened species and are protected under the Bald Eagle Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The survey is sponsored by the DNR Natural Heritage Program in cooperation with the USFWS and was made possible through the Nongame Fish and Wildlife Fund. Visit the DNR Web site at www.michigandnr.com for details of the survey, more information on endangered and threatened animals, wildlife viewing opportunities and other features.

LTBB fishery program includes hatchery, assessment and research



Randy Claramunt, LTBB fishery biologist

The Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians reservation boundaries covers over 200,000 acres along the northeast shore of Lake Michigan. The 1836 Treaty tribe was reaffirmed in 1994, and joined CORA in 2001. It's Natural Resource Commission formed shortly after reaffirmation and Natural Resource staff was hired in 1996. They began monitoring chinook, lake trout, and whitefish.

Today at LTBB, there are 10 natural resource staff, half tribal, with three full time fishery and two-part time fishery staff. Fishery Biologist Randy Claramunt works with Fishery Technicians Pat O'Neil and Adrian Kral. Christine Diana has worked part time for the past 1.5 years, and Joe Mitchell will be added this summer.

According to Claramunt, LTBB's Great Lakes Fisheries Program consists of a fish hatchery (Odana Fish Enhancement Facility) and assessment (of commercial harvest, monitoring and projects) and research (early life history of lake trout, why they are not reproducing, early mortality syndrome).

The hatchery is being developed. Last year was the first year for producing fry, Claramunt said, and he is hoping to get into production soon. The site is a three-acre lot on Lake Michigan near the Straits. He is also interested in yellow perch and walleye production, and perhaps salmon down the road.

Why do it? Claramunt thinks that to benefit from the resource, one should put back. Helping to rehabilitate and sustain the resource also asserts tribes' rights to the resource. Finally, it's an allocation issue — if the state controls stocking, it controls fishery.

Claramunt said the mission statement developed by the tribal council defines why the tribe pursues the hatchery and the reason behind it: "Recover and restore all fish species, stocks and populations of fish that inhabit reservation waters and are culturally important to the tribe while expanding fishing opportunities for tribal members."

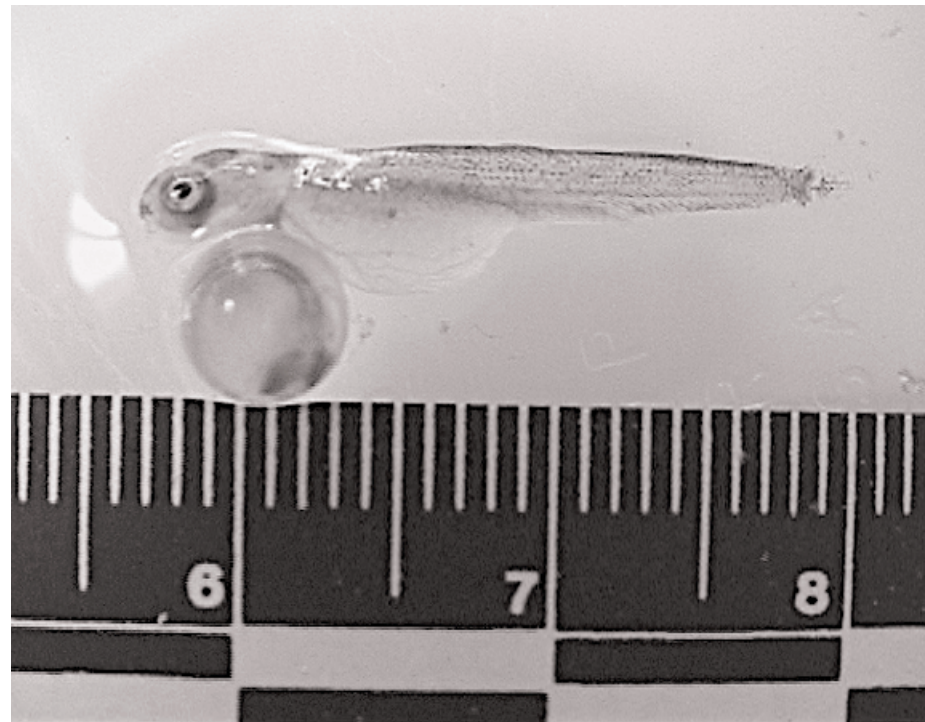
"I really believe if tribes don't take an active role, they are missing out on the right to use because control will be in the hands of agencies that stock," he said.

The hatchery has benefitted from help around the state: LSSU contributed rearing trays and the state a tank. CORA Fishery Enhancement Director Greg Wright visited the facility and offered his insights. East Jordan Federal Hatchery on the Jordan River loaned \$3-5,000 in equipment. And, White Earth reservation contributed hatchery tanks. "We've received a lot of support," said Claramunt, adding that they also received a BIA grant. O'Neil takes a lot responsibility for hatchery, added Claramunt.

In 1998, LTBB fishery staff conducted an experimental stocking of 1 million lake trout eggs from a federal hatchery. They were placed on a Little Traverse Bay substream. Last fall, they took 30,000 eggs from fish spawning in the lake and stripped and fertilized the eggs in their facility. LSSU is now holding the 20,000 that hatched.

Claramunt plans to stock 10,000 fry experimentally in Little Traverse Bay on April 17 to work out the process. The other 10,000 will go to the Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans to be tested for Early Mortality Syndrome. Claramunt is finding a lot of lake trout are susceptible to EMS, the same syndrome that salmon have suffered for years.

In the future, Little Traverse will continue rearing, conduct more experimental early life history work, and stock in the Bay where lake trout are seen naturally reproducing. The tribe also recently committed substantial Consent Decree funding for the construction of a better facility, ponds and buildings, said Claramunt.



Lake trout in egg stage and fry stage, products of the Little Traverse Bay Band Fishery Program. The Odana Fish Enhancement Facility produced fry for the first time last year.



Aquaculture workers kill thousands of fish in bid to control infectious salmon anemia

LUBEC, Maine (AP, Jan. 16) — Thousands of young salmon were hauled from pens in Cobscook Bay and trucked to a composting plant Jan. 15 as fish farmers sought to control a deadly virus that threatens the industry.

Workers had raised the two-pound salmon since spring, looking to the day when the 10-pound fish would be processed and sold as fillets to seafood markets and restaurants along the East Coast. Instead, they were destined to become garden fertilizer.

The state ordered the eradication of all 1.5 million salmon in the bay to control infectious salmon anemia that spread from Canada. The unprecedented fish kill, paid for by the U.S. Agriculture Department, has shaken the local economy, but also is restoring some hope that the salmon aquaculture industry can ultimately rebuild and thrive again.

The disease has devastated the struggling Down East industry, forcing processors to shut down and worsening the region's chronic unemployment.

The only known way for farmers to stop its spread is to kill all the fish in a pen when the

first fish show symptoms or die.

On Jan. 15, Mahar oversaw a crew of five men working in the cold and snow to empty a large net that once held 30,000 healthy young fish. Although some fish came up dead or discolored from disease, the vast majority appeared healthy and robust.

Farmers based in Lubec and Eastport could remove the last of cultivated salmon from Cobscook Bay by week's end, said Steve Ellis, a USDA veterinarian supervising the work.

Infectious salmon anemia kills salmon, but does not affect humans who eat the fish. The salmon being destroyed are too small to be cut into marketable fillets and are being disposed of as fertilizer or as fish waste that's ground into animal feed.

As the last fish are removed, aquaculture businesses are turning their attention to hauling out and disinfecting all of the nets, pens and other equipment. Even the boats used to tend and harvest the fish will be taken out of the water to be sanitized. Then the companies must wait four to 16 months before replacing the pens and slowly starting to raise fish again.

LOOKING FOR FUNDS?

National Fish & Wildlife Foundation may be able to help

At last fall's regional NAFWS conference in Bay Mills, National Fish & Wildlife Foundation representative Don Wikke made a presentation about the Foundation and what it has to offer, condensed below from last October's **Tribal Fishing** newsletter:

Don Wikke, National Fish & Wildlife Foundation:

The Foundation's focus is conservation. Part of its mission is to encourage public and private collaboration.

Foundation priorities are:

- Tall and mixed grass prairie,
- Aquatic conservation,
- Mississippi Alluvial Valley,
- Native American lands,
- Large conservation areas near

urban centers, and

— Wildlife in agricultural settings.

The Foundation has given out 100 grants to tribes in the past decade but only two in this area, Wikke said, mostly because there was no area office in this region. He encouraged tribes to apply.

Grant sizes vary; they could be \$5,000 or they could be \$300,000. The median is \$60,000, he said. The National Fish & Wildlife Foundation works on a pre-proposal basis. Send Wikke a couple of pages to look over. See <www.nfwf.org>.

He also encouraged tribes to establish their own foundation.

Alaska fishermen find farmed salmon a formidable foe

By Wesley Loy

Anchorage Daily News

ANCHORAGE (AP, Jan 13)

— When Dick Jacobsen was a kid, his family had to abandon his home village of Squaw Harbor on Unga Island along the south Alaska Peninsula. The island's industries had dried up, the people had fled and finally the school closed.

Now Jacobsen, a Sand Point resident and mayor of the Aleutians East Borough, is trying to save other towns in the region.

And that means saving the commercial salmon industry.

"I've been a fisherman all my life," he said. "I started fishing with my dad when I was 6. We can't exist on what we're doing anymore."

Salmon fishing, a bedrock Alaska industry for more than a century, is withering.

The numbers have been tallied from last summer's harvest, and

they are bittersweet. Although the state remains blessed with scads of salmon — nearly 175 million fish were landed last summer — fishermen took home only \$216 million for them, less than half what they got 15 years ago.

Alaska once was king in world salmon markets, accounting for nearly one in every two fish available. Now, in just over a decade, it has slipped to fewer than one in five fish. Foreign salmon farms, which barely existed 20 years ago, rule now.

Alaska's salmon all return in erratic droves during three or four summer months, forcing most of the catch to be frozen or canned and sometimes compromising quality. The salmon farms can churn out controlled supplies of fresh fish all year long. That has won favor from restaurants and grocers in the key markets of Japan, the United States and Europe.

Alaska fishermen are struggling to pay for fuel, crewmen and grub out of their season's catches. At Bristol Bay, the average boat used to gross \$100,000 for a month's work. Last summer the average slipped to about \$22,500 before expenses.

Debts are going bad. The Alaska Division of Investments, which makes loans to fishermen for boats and state fishing permits, has received 309 applications to extend loans, up 52 percent from last year.

The downturn in the industry in Alaska is happening at a time when global demand for salmon is exploding. Last year the world consumed 3.7 billion pounds of salmon, triple the amount of 20 years earlier. The salmon farms have won almost all of the new demand.

Although no one is seriously talking about legalizing salmon farms, other big ideas are in play

to reform the Alaska industry so that at least some can continue to make a living. They include lifting the ban on fish traps, buying out some fishermen and finding novel new ways to catch and market wild salmon at lower cost.

Regardless, Alaska's salmon heyday might be over.

"The wild industry is now a follower, and it will never be anything but a follower from now on," according to James Anderson, a University of Rhode Island natural resources economist.

Gov. Tony Knowles declared an economic disaster for Bristol Bay and other Western Alaska salmon provinces last summer and recently sent a letter to President Bush asking for the same sort of federal aid an agricultural state might get in a drought.

Fish farmers now make more than three times as much salmon as Alaska catches. Seafood industry watchers say farmers who raise salmon in hundreds of ocean net pens along the coasts of Chile, Norway, Scotland, Canada and even of Washington and Maine have glutted markets with cheap fish, creating record low wholesale prices.

That's a big reason why Bristol Bay fishermen took home only 40 cents a pound for their catch last summer, the lowest price since 1975. In 1988, the fish paid up to \$2.40 a pound at the dock, making an average six-pound sockeye worth more than a barrel of Alaska crude oil.

The historic theme of Alaska salmon management has been to spread the considerable wealth of salmon fishing to as many Alaskans as possible and prevent concentration of the industry in the hands of a few, usually Outside companies.

One of the biggest in a series of key decisions came when Alaska became a state in 1959. It immediately banned fish traps — massive corrals that netted migratory salmon with great efficiency. The traps dominated the catch in many areas, angering fishermen whose boats were idled and who saw the trap as a tool of the big San Francisco and Seattle canning companies.

The ban solidified the current structure of Alaska's salmon industry: Thousands of small boats racing around, each a small business with crewmen to pay, food, gear and insurance to buy and loans to pay off.

Thousands more Alaska fishermen stretch their nets from beaches.

To ensure everybody gets salmon, intricate state regulations limit boat and net size and ban some equipment that would let fishermen catch more fish faster.

"Some folks have jumped to the conclusion that Alaska can't beat the salmon farmers, so it should join them. That's bunk," Brad Warren, editor of the trade journal Pacific Fishing.

The problem is, the Alaska industry and state officials never had to compete before the farms came along, he said. So the industry was shaped too much to meet social goals, making it highly inefficient.

As it stands, some parts of the salmon business are competing better than others.

Alaska's coast supports not one salmon fishery but many, from Ketchikan to Cordova, Cook Inlet to Kodiak, Chignik to False Pass, Bristol Bay to Nome. Each has its own focus, its own group of fishermen and packers, its own markets and its own problems. Farmed fish and inefficiency aggravate them all to varying extents.

Farmed salmon hits places like Bristol Bay and Chignik the hardest, as the high-value red salmon from these areas compete most directly with farmed in the vital Japanese market. An exception is the Copper River fishery based in Cordova, where fishermen have marketed their May king and red runs into an enthusiastic first-of-the-season cult following in the Lower 48.

Doing nothing is not an option for the industry or the state, said Lt. Gov. Fran Ulmer, who led recent strategy sessions on saving the salmon business.

"The economy of coastal Alaska is very dependent on commercial fisheries," she said. "It's a big deal."



Largemouth bass virus spreads in Michigan: anglers urged to help prevent spread of disease

LANSING — State resource officials announced March 12 that Largemouth Bass Virus appears to be spreading in southern Michigan lakes, and called upon anglers to help contain the disease and protect fish populations.

Largemouth Bass Virus (LMBV) is one of more than 100 naturally occurring viruses that affect fish, and is closely related to viruses found in frogs and other amphibians. Its origin and how it is spread are unknown. The virus is not known to infect humans, and infected fish are considered safe to eat. However, it is recommended that all fish should be thoroughly cooked as a precaution.

In fall 2000, biologists from the Michigan and Indiana Departments of Natural Resources discovered the presence of LMBV while jointly investigating a die-off of largemouth bass in Lake George, located on the Michigan-Indiana border near I-69.

The discovery marked the first time LMBV had been detected in either Michigan or Indiana and was the furthest north that the virus had been detected in the United States. It was first discovered in the Santee-Cooper Reservoir of South Carolina in 1995, following a die-off of largemouth bass.

Since then, the virus has been detected in wild fish from North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, Kentucky, Mississippi, Texas, Missouri, Arkansas, Indiana, Illinois and Michigan.

It is now confirmed that the virus in Lake George was not an isolated event. LMBV has been found in another border lake between Michigan and Indiana, two additional Michigan lakes and three additional lakes in northern Indiana. The virus was also detected this year in lakes and reservoirs in Illinois for the first time.

Michigan DNR Fish Pathologist John Hnath said LMBV appears to infect other fish species, including smallmouth bass, bluegill and crappies, but has caused mortality to only largemouth bass. Most fish mortalities associated with the virus involve other stressors to the fish, including warm water temperatures and heavy fishing pressure.

"The DNR cannot eradicate this virus or treat affected wild fish populations," Hnath said. "However, as we continue investigating this outbreak, we appreciate receiving reports of unusual fish mortalities."

Consistent with the recommendations reported from the Largemouth Bass Virus Workshop III, sponsored Feb. 22 by ESPN and BASS Federation, the DNR is calling on bass clubs and others who target largemouth bass to voluntarily help reduce angling stress on largemouth bass populations dur-

ing warm weather.

DNR Fisheries Division Chief Kelley Smith noted the DNR will be monitoring lakes in southern Michigan this summer, in partnership with the Michigan BASS Federation.

"This disease has never been detected this far north, and we still do not know how largemouth bass populations will be affected in Michigan's lakes," Smith said. "We urge all members of the angling community to help us monitor the waters. Further, we look forward to working with our partners at the Michigan BASS Federation, and appreciate their willingness to assist us in collecting information necessary to better understand and manage this virus."

There are few outward signs that a fish has the virus. The virus has been found in many lakes where there have not been reports of disease or mortalities of fish. Affected fish usually appear normal, although they may be lethargic, swim slowly and are less responsive to activity around them.

Dying fish often are seen near the surface and have difficulty remaining upright. Upon internal examination, such fish usually will have bloated swim bladders, which accounts for the cause of swimming problems. Red sores or other lesions occasionally may be seen on the skin of the fish, but these are secondary in nature and not part of the virus infection.

The DNR concurs with recommendations from the LMBV Workshop III, and reminds anglers and boaters to take the following steps to help prevent the spread of the virus:

- * Clean boats, trailers, other equipment thoroughly between fishing trips to keep from transporting LMBV, as well as other undesirable pathogens and organisms, from one water body to another.
- * Do not move fish or fish parts from one body of water to another, and do not release live bait into any water body.
- * Handle bass as gently as possible if you intend to release them.
- * Stage tournaments during cooler weather, so fish caught will not be so stressed.
- * Report dead or dying fish to state wildlife agencies.
- * Volunteer to help agencies collect bass for LMBV monitoring.
- * Educate other anglers about LMBV.

The Michigan DNR will continue to communicate any new information learned about the disease in Michigan. The following internet site offers more information:

<<http://espn.go.com/sitetools/s/sitemap/index.html>>

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Please direct all inquiries to Jennifer Dale, 12140 W. Lakeshore Dr., Brimley, MI 49715, 906-248-3241, ext. 1170, newspaper@bmic.net. CORA Executive Director Faith McGruther may be reached at 906-632-0043 or cotfma@up.net. See www.cotfma.org for more information.

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