

**Conservation Congress
South Shore Cultural Center
March 12, 2013**

1. Sustainable Resource Harvest

- Continue to maintain parks
- Generate different revenue stream, such as user fees (charge fee at park entrance)
- Take a hard line on enforcement, it would mean additional revenue from fines and fees
- There needs to be more fishing in Northeastern IL and more outreach on potential non-hunting activities. There is a bigger population up in the Northeastern region so target outreach and activities towards them.
- Fishing is difficult in the city of Chicago, others have a negative attitude towards fishermen
- There is poor access to fishing along the lake in Chicago
- There needs to be more clarity on laws relating to water use and fishing. Marinas have their own rules, fishermen may not be aware of what those are. Partner with Chicago Park District to make sure that access is available and maintained along Chicago's lakefront
- Stocking of salmon in Lake Michigan should be done in more central location in Chicago since now there are additional sites of Northerly Island and 31st harbor
- Charge tournament fishing fees – tournament fishermen would be willing to pay more for permits to support IDNR programming
- Target inner city kids and minorities for fishing opportunities

2. Sustainable Provision of Outdoor Recreational Access

- IDNR needs more fishing instructor staff
- Partner with other organizations to teach fishing to Chicago kids and youth
- There needs to be more outreach to inner city youth
- There needs to be more camping opportunities for inner city kids, for example at such locations as Northerly Island. IDNR should partner with Chicago Park District and Forest Preserve District to provide camping experiences to inner city kids
- For fishing tournaments, make it easier to obtain a fishing permit. Size limits for tournaments should be 14" and not 21". Variances for fish size should be allowed for fishing tournaments.
- Stock Chicago lagoons with the same number of fish as was done in 2011. 2012 stocking levels were too low.
- Build a youth constituency. IDNR has to get kids out in nature and expose them to outdoor recreational opportunities. It has to be a long-term priority, IDNR could partner with schools and other institutions to reach those goals.
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3. Sustainable Resource Protection

- Find an economically viable model that works for resource protection. Considerations include charging user fees, putting funds in land trusts, placing safeguards on funds to make them viable.
- Increase price of fish and hunting licenses and stamps
- Increase price of non-resident licenses
- Increase price of boater registration fees
- Charge fees for entry into State Parks as other states do
- Create partnerships with other conservation partners (non-profit groups) to protect lands that will create more conservation corridors between existing protected areas
- Increase revenue of sportsmen ID card and fishing license on the model that is used in Michigan (there is an additional charge for license if one forgets to bring old license)
- There is more enforcement needed for fishing and there is a need for more conservation officers. There needs to be a greater IDNR conservation officer visibility along the Lake Michigan shore.
- There needs to be an improved poaching reporting system in Chicago. There should be a poacher hotline that is local. Current option of calling the conservation police main number does not result in any quick response in Chicago. States like Michigan have a much more responsive system that Illinois could use as a model.

4. Sustainable Resource Development and Extraction

- Don't lease lands for extraction next to sensitive resources or sensitive lands and waters
- Fee structure charged for leases should cover costs of post-mining restoration. IDNR should not be required to bear those costs.
- Keep the fee structure from becoming politicized.
- Develop best management practices, fee structures, post mining restoration based on examples of other states that are considered to be successful in managing extractive resources.
- Be careful in developing and granting fracking licenses. Do not grant licenses in vicinity of sensitive lands and resources. Monitor fracking activities. Illinois should take time to develop our policies to make them as well-considered as possible and not be pressured to move too quickly.

5. Building Bridges

- More fishing instructors in urban areas
- IDNR has to advocate/lobby with Chicago Park District to ease restrictions for fishing and improve access for fishing instructions in Chicago.
- Involve more volunteers in all areas of IDNR work, which could help compensate for reduced staffing. An especially important area of volunteer involvement could be outreach and education. Reach out to tournament fishing groups and engage them as volunteers.
- IDNR needs to commit to more staff resources to recruit and manage volunteers.

- There needs to be more cooperation between IDNR and tournament fishermen. There is a need for more outreach from IDNR and more communication. Some examples include hosting an annual meeting for tournament fishermen, and organizing a meeting between IDNR leadership/fishing enforcement and tournament leaders.
- IDNR needs to make an effort to change adversarial perceptions, especially from tournament fishermen.
- IDNR communication and outreach:
 - revamp website so it's easy to use,
 - make teacher resources easily available on website,
 - improve electronic communications

Notes from Additional Input Forms

Comment Form 1

Attaining permits for tournament fishing has become nearly impossible for us fishing Lake Michigan. The ironic thing about the 21" size limit that is currently in place is that fisherman, tournament fisherman asked for that length limit to be put in place to make it tougher for poachers to take 2-5 lbs bass legally out of the lake. We never thought we would run into difficulty attaining permits of 14" for THAT day only for the sole purpose of the tournament.

The tournament fisherman care as much about the Bass as anyone else. We are extremely conservation minded, we care for the fish better than anyone else and respect the resource. Tournament fisherman spend money buying licenses, pay the launch fees at the harbors & keep an eye on bank walking poachers. It's just too bad its gotten so difficult to attain the permits. Hopefully this can be changed going forward in 2013.

Thank you

Ross Tornabere

Comment Form 2

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Meeting Date: 3/12/13

- More enforcement on poachers with higher fees
- Higher license fees for sportsmen – fishing hunting license & stamps
- Enact a sportsmen card like Michigan. \$1.50 if you don't come in with your old license
- Have a good way for people to actively report poaching in Chicago

- More officers to enforce
- Stock central city of Chicago with salmon since we now have Northerly Island and 31st Harbor
- More inner city fishing for minorities – we don't have guns in Chicago and we don't want to teach them hunting
- Partner with groups to teach more children
- Give NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS more power since we don't get represented well
- More user based fees
- Lobby Chicago Park District to allow IDNR to give more exposure they are too competitive with DNR!!
- The 2012 budget restricted stocking of Chicago park lagoons – that was a mistake – so we need to increase fish stocking in the inner city lagoons
- Partner with fishing groups - to teach inner city fishing
- More IDNR urban fishing instructions and programs
- Open perch fishing in Lake Michigan in July but close the month of April while they are spawning – the reason is because Chicago people just go a few miles to Indiana & buy a Indiana \$35 non-resident license & fish
- More representation of IDNR on the Chicago local level where the state population lives
- Have a local Chicago committee for the planning of the new proposed Millennium Reserve
- Create a group for the Chicago fishermen – to expose IDNR in a good light
- The Chicago Park District is not capable of sharing Chicago's lakefront with IDNR because they are driven by restricting access with rules and high fees for events. Access there for events must be user friendly.