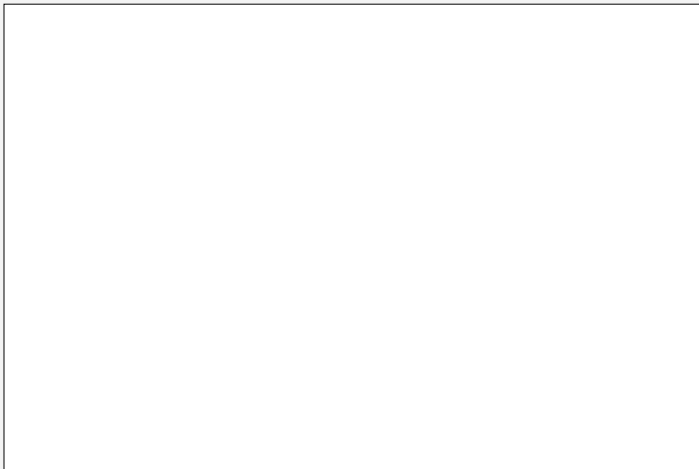


- DNR News -

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Contact: [Brenda Archambo](#), 231-625-2776 and [Dave Borgeson](#), 231-350-2663

Sturgeon for Tomorrow seeking volunteers to protect sturgeon along Black River



Volunteers are needed in Cheboygan County now through early June to stand guard as mature lake sturgeon head upstream to their spawning sites along the Black River.

The Black Lake Chapter of Sturgeon for Tomorrow is working in partnership with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and tribes to protect the fish from

being illegally harvested during the six-week spawning season.

Sgt. Mark DePew, who leads DNR Law Enforcement Division's efforts on the river, said, "This program, that protects this iconic species when they are most vulnerable, is a model of how agencies and the public can cooperate to get needed work accomplished."

The lake sturgeon, which can weigh up to 200 pounds and live to be 100 years old, is listed as a threatened species in Michigan, with any sport fishing being closely regulated.

"For over 20 years, the annual Sturgeon Guarding Program has proven that people serving as sturgeon guards watching over the river have virtually eliminated poaching, while helping to ensure the protection and reproductive success of the species," said, Mary Paulson the guarding program's volunteer coordinator. "It's a unique and rewarding experience to witness these majestic fish swimming up the Black River, and to be a key player in safeguarding one of Michigan's most valuable natural resources."

Volunteers are assigned shifts along the river to stand watch and report suspicious activity to the DNR conservation officers who also are patrolling. The program also uses aerial surveillance to monitor the area.

“The experience of watching researchers capture, tag and release these amazing fish is, in itself, worth the effort of becoming involved,” said Brenda Archambo, president of Sturgeon for Tomorrow’s sturgeon recovery effort in the Black River/Cheboygan River watershed. “We also encourage those who enjoy mountain biking, mushrooming, hiking, kayaking, canoeing and camping in beautiful wild areas to partner with the sturgeon guarding effort.”

While volunteers will be assigned sites to stand guard, there will be on-site coordinators at the river to assist and answer questions. Additionally, volunteers also are asked to assist in recording the number of fish active in the area.

Lake sturgeon rehabilitation has seen ongoing efforts at federal, state, tribal and local levels since the late 1900s, when the species dramatically declined due to overharvesting and habitat loss. Monitoring of harvesting practices, along with rearing and stocking efforts in selected lakes, have headlined restoration efforts across the state.

The monitoring activity, designed to protect the fish, is also an opportunity to get involved in natural resource management and has drawn volunteers ranging from families, church groups, Scouting groups and students to artists such as photographers.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines for reducing the spread of COVID-19 – including social distancing of at least 6 feet and use of facial coverings when around others from outside your household – must be adhered to by volunteers and will be strictly enforced by coordinators. Individuals or groups interested in volunteering should contact Jim and Mary Paulson at 989-763-7568. Volunteers also can register online at sturgeonfortomorrow.org/guarding-program.php or search online for Sturgeon for Tomorrow, Black Lake Chapter.

Stay informed, stay safe: [Mask up Michigan](#), [DNR COVID-19 response](#)