

Annual Report
Fisheries Heritage Committee
June 2020

The committee membership consists of the following:

Tuffy Cross, DNR, retired	Ron Meneghel, Alpena Public Library
Suzanne Stone, DNR	Brandon Schroeder, Michigan Sea Grant
Mike Ableidinger	Jim Johnson, DNR retired, Chair
Chris Witulski, Museum Director	Tracy Page, DNR Aquatic Ed. Coord.
	John Caplis, Alpena Public Schools

The *Katherine V* display proved to be a popular feature for 2019 Log Cabin Day. In addition to the *Katherine V*, the Kahlenberg diesel was on display in a building assembled by Tuffy and his corps of volunteers. This year saw final touches that completed construction of the engines shelter. The *Katherine V* has been the subject of several classroom tours this year. We now have a video “tour” of the *Katherine V* that can be accessed by visitors to guide them through the exhibit when Tuffy cannot be there.

Chris lined up construction companies to shore up the sagging building foundation area – the fill around the building was excavated, rock walls were installed, and the excavation backfilled and contoured. All that remains to completing the *Katherine V* portion of the display is to add a bow support to the cradle.

Chris also contracted out excavation for the pad the *Chinook* will set on. We marked off the dimensions of the display site and contractors removed material, leveled the pad area, stabilized the banks of the excavation with cut stone, backfilled and contoured the excavation, and pored a reinforced concrete pad for support of the *Chinook’s* cradle. Besser staff (Matt) and Tuffy and his volunteer force did much of the hard work of backfilling and contouring the display site. We worked with R.S. Scott Engineering to develop specifications for the cradle and to design the bow support for the *Katherine V’s* cradle. R.S. Scott delivered the engineered plans and Besser Corp. has agreed to build the *Chinook* cradle, which we hope to see delivered soon. We patched up the shrink-wrapping of the *Chinook* so that it could survive another winter. We began work on specifications and material needs for building a boardwalk “dock” connecting the two vessels.

An exciting project of the past year has been working with Zach Irving, videographer, to interview the three LeBlanc brothers about their family history in the fishing industry. We made arrangements with the Sault Ste. Marie tribe for Zach to go aboard Albert LeBlanc fishing tug to film a day of fishing out of Hammond Bay Harbor. We are excited at the prospect of working with Zach on what we hope will be a unique documentary on the commercial fishery, the story of

an important commercial fishing family, and the challenges facing the shrinking commercial fishery today.

The Chair worked on two fishery-heritage documents/projects. A Chinook salmon data set collected by the *RV Chinook* and the DNR from 1973-2005 (including 4,914 salmon) was digested into a file that might be useful to students for math/science projects. A document describing the data set, the history of the Chinook salmon study, and the role of Chinook salmon in Lake Huron over the years was drafted. Suggested projects and sources of further information were included in the document. The Chair is also working on a document describing the importance of the lower Thunder Bay River and its rapids to Native Americans as a critical food resource, the attributes of the river that made it such an important fishing ground, and causes for the disappearance of these important spawning runs of fish. We are seeking oral histories regarding the use of the lower river for Native American fishing to better establish that these rapids (now inundated by three hydroelectric dams) were critical nutritional and heritage resources.

The Chair drafted documents to be used in the accession process for the *RV Chinook* and the *Chinook's* accessory equipment and gear.

Finally, Jim Johnson, Brandon Schroeder, and Tuffy Cross attended the annual Fishery Heritage Trail meeting at Bay City. We learned much about the commercial fishing history, current state of the industry, and about the ship building industry of Bay City area and toured Bay City museums and other historically significant displays, shared stories, and coordinated on future work.