



Uniting Citizens to Conserve, Protect and Enhance Michigan's Natural Resources and Outdoor Heritage
PO Box 30235 Lansing, MI 48909 | 800.777.6720 P | www.mucc.org

April 29, 2020

Governor Gretchen Whitmer
P.O. Box 30013
Lansing, MI 48909

RE: Charter Boat and Fishing Guide Operation

Dear Governor Whitmer,

Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC) is a 501(c)3 conservation organization representing more than 200 affiliate clubs and 40,000 members in the state of Michigan. Founded in 1937, our mission is to unite citizens to conserve, protect and enhance Michigan's natural resources and outdoor heritage. Today, we are reaching out to you to express our concerns on behalf of fishing guides and charter captains in Michigan. We hope this is an issue we can work together on.

MUCC is conscious of the public health crisis associated with COVID-19 and supports the administration in taking well-informed, scientifically based action to curb the spread of this virus. Since the onset of the COVID-19 crisis and associated "Stay Home, Stay Safe" orders, fishing guides, both inland and on the Great Lakes, have been shuttered, despite necessary regulatory licenses from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) being extended. There has been a significant concern with the issuance of boat registration decals from the Secretary of State.

Other states such as Ohio, Pennsylvania and Indiana have instituted measures to allow fishing guides and charter captains to get back to work. On May 7, it is expected that construction and building trades will resume in-person activities. You have advocated that outdoor industries and individuals working in them are a top priority for you, and we strongly urge the administration to consider fishing guides in this next wave of reopenings on May 7. Charter fishing shares workplace proximity constraints with outdoor industries like building and construction.

MUCC proposes these common sense **interim** measures, in accordance with current and future social distancing protocols, to help get guides back to work:

1. Vessels under 17 feet are allowed **one client and one guide**
2. Vessels between 17 and 24 feet are allowed up to **two clients from separate households and one guide**
3. Vessels between 24 and 30 feet are allowed up to **three clients from separate households and one guide.**
4. Vessels 30 feet and over are allowed up to **four clients from separate households, in addition to the guide and a mate.**

5. **If all clients are from the same immediate household with one guide, there would be no further restrictions regardless of vessel size (beyond vessel capacity and other regulatory requirements).**

*All guides would be subject to understanding their boat's capacity, in the context of beam width vs. length, as it applies to keeping those from outside the same household six feet apart.

Furthermore:

1. All clients from separate households and guides must remain six feet apart at all times.
2. Captains may replace a client with a first mate if desired.
3. Guides must provide proper hygiene items to clients including hand sanitizer.
4. Guides must disinfect every practicable surface of their vessel after each client trip.
5. Fishing buffs or a cloth covering consistent with Executive Order 2020-59 must be worn while on the vessel fishing.
6. Guides must utilize netting practices consistent with social distancing, which includes using a long-handled net and the length of the fishing rod to remain six feet apart.
7. Clients must drive separately to launch sites if they are not of the same household. (This is already part of an EO)
8. Guides must communicate with clients the importance of not congregating when a fish is hooked or to take pictures.
9. Common facilities must be used in accordance with social distancing rules

These interim measures would also apply to walk-in fishing guides. Protocols requiring hygiene, face coverings and disinfecting client gear would be expected.

Yours in Conservation,



Amy Trotter, Executive Director

CC:

Attorney General Dana Nessel
Senate Majority Leader Mike Shirkey
Senate Minority Leader Jim Ananich
Speaker of the House Lee Chatfield
House Minority Leader Christine Greig
Department of Natural Resources Director Daniel Eichinger
Department of Natural Resources Deputy Director Shannon Hanna
Department of Natural Resources Fisheries Division Chief Jim Dexter
Department of Natural Resources Parks and Recreation Division Chief Ron Olson
Department of Natural Resources Law Enforcement Division Chief Gary Hagler
Energy and Environment Policy Advisory Kara Cook
Michigan Charter Boat Association President Bill Winowiecki
Michigan Charter Boat Association Past President Captain Denny Grinold