

EXECUTIVE DIGEST

FISHERIES DIVISION

INTRODUCTION

This report, issued in April 2000, contains the results of our performance audit* of the Fisheries Division, Department of Natural Resources.

AUDIT PURPOSE

This performance audit was conducted as part of the constitutional responsibility of the Office of the Auditor General. Performance audits are conducted on a priority basis related to the potential for improving effectiveness* and efficiency*.

BACKGROUND

The Fisheries Division of the Department of Natural Resources is responsible for fisheries management in the State. The mission* of the Division is to protect and enhance the public trust in populations and habitat of fishes and other forms of aquatic life and to promote optimum use of these resources for the benefit of the people of Michigan.

The Division is composed of four units: fish production, research and assessment, program services, and field operations. The Division fulfills its responsibilities through research and assessment of the State's lakes, rivers, and streams to understand the habitat of the fishery resources. Also, the Division operates six fish hatcheries. The six

hatcheries together in 1998 stocked 21,667,246 fish in the Great Lakes and 22,964,099 fish in inland lakes and streams.

The quantity and location of fish stockings are based on extensive analysis of the Division's fish biologists in the field.

Each fish stocking is the culmination of the Division's united team effort working toward better fishery management. All fish stocking requests are subjected to a peer review before the final stocking is allowed. Each request then goes through a management review process to be approved for stocking.

The Division had operating appropriations of \$21,967,300 for fiscal year 1998-99 and 226 full-time and seasonal employees as of September 30, 1999.

**AUDIT OBJECTIVE,
CONCLUSION, AND
NOTEWORTHY
ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

Audit Objective: To assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the Fisheries Division operations.

Conclusion: We concluded that the Fisheries Division operations were effective and efficient. We did not note any reportable conditions* .

Noteworthy Accomplishments: On August 31, 1991, the Fisheries Division employed 273 persons. In 1997, the Division implemented an early-out program and lost many employees. As of September 30, 1999, the Division had 226 full-time and seasonal employees. Although staff size was reduced, the Division was still meeting the needs of the public and the stocking requests were being

adequately met. We noted that employees were enthusiastic and dedicated toward the mission of the Division.

**AUDIT SCOPE AND
METHODOLOGY**

Our audit scope was to examine the program and other records of the Fisheries Division. Our audit was conducted in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States and, accordingly, included such tests of the records and such other auditing procedures as we considered necessary in the circumstances.

To accomplish our objective, we examined the Fisheries Division's records and activities for the period October 1, 1995 through October 31, 1999.

Our audit procedures included interviewing Division staff and reviewing applicable statutes, laws, appropriations acts, rules, policies, and procedures. We visited 2 hatcheries, 3 research facilities, and 1 field operations office to gain an understanding of, observe, and analyze the Division's programs. We analyzed the Division's program reports, fish stocking records, minutes of management meetings and public meetings, and other records that related to the Division's planning process, operating procedures, and administration for its programs.

In addition, we surveyed informed stakeholders (see supplemental information) to evaluate stakeholder satisfaction with the Division's method of addressing citizens' concerns and complaints.

PRIOR AUDIT
FOLLOW-UP

The Division complied with 1 of the 2 recommendations from our prior audit of the Division's programs. The other prior audit recommendation will be followed up in our biennial Single Audit* of the Department.