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The MSU Fenske Fellowship: Fresh Perspectives on Fish, Management, and Law

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Molly J. Good pictured with a Chinook Salmon *Oncorhynchus tshawytscha* from Lake Michigan. Photo credit: Andrew Muir.

Professionals from diverse backgrounds must collaborate for the management of fisheries and aquatic ecosystems to be effective. These professionals include researchers, who provide needed science and data, which informs management decisions; managers, who protect and conserve fisheries and aquatic resources for our future use; and policymakers, who communicate important issues and impact change through policy and legislation. These groups of professionals represent some of the key participants in today's fisheries and aquatic ecosystem management processes. However, an equally significant but often overlooked group of professionals is comprised of law enforcement officials, whose role in fisheries and aquatic resource management processes includes discovering, deterring, and decreasing illegal and environmentally harmful behavior.

Law enforcement officials are the only professionals that possess the on-the-ground power to prevent behavior that harms fisheries resources and aquatic ecosystems, such as polluting, overharvesting, or transporting species from one location to another. Law enforcement officials commonly prevent these harmful behaviors by issuing warnings, citations, and fines, or by educating anglers and natural resource users about the importance of fisheries and aquatic resource protection and conservation.

As a new doctoral student at Michigan State University (MSU), I recognized the significance of law enforcement in maintaining order in society from a criminological standpoint, but I did not fully understand its role in fisheries and aquatic ecosystem management and its ultimate influence on fisheries and aquatic resources sustainability. I was eager to better understand its role and influence and further to learn about its effectiveness in the protection and conservation of fisheries and aquatic resources. It was not until I became the 2014–2015 MSU



Janice Lee Fenske (1954–2005). Photo credit: Kelley Smith.

Janice Lee Fenske (1954–2005) was the first female fisheries biologist in the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) Fisheries Division. Fenske's colleagues, friends, mentees, and family members knew her to be a dynamic leader and bold advocate for the state's fisheries and their habitats. During her 27 years of service with MDNR, Fenske worked tirelessly and, as needed, brazenly to overcome adversity and external prejudices, becoming one of the most valued and respected fisheries biologists within the agency. Fenske was also a consummate mentor, who shared her love and passion for fisheries, natural resources, and the outdoors with others. The Michigan State University (MSU) Janice Lee Fenske Excellence in Fisheries Management Fellowship honors Fenske's legacy by recruiting a graduate student from the underserved community to the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife at MSU and providing them with a fisheries management agency mentoring experience that will benefit the student's personal and professional development.

For more information about the MSU Fenske Fellowship, please search Facebook for "MSU Fenske Fellows." Additionally, please visit our blog, MSU Fenske Fellows, at: fenskefellow.wordpress.com. For more information about applying for the MSU Fenske Fellowship, please contact Dana Infante at infanted@anr.msu.edu.

Janice Lee Fenske Excellence in Fisheries Management Fellow that I was able to explore some of these new ideas.

During my tenure as an MSU Fenske Fellow, I realized that fisheries and aquatic resource management is more complex and integrated than I had originally considered. Groups of people who manage fisheries and aquatic resources have to consider an array of variables when they make decisions regarding total allowable catches, management plans, and fishing seasons. Not only do they have to work together, collectively, to come to a consensus on difficult issues, but they also have to consider the diversity of people's values when they make decisions. In this world, people have different values regarding the state of fisheries and aquatic resources, and these values often conflict with each other. Fisheries and aquatic ecosystem managers are charged with a serious challenge in collaborating effectively to manage not only the resource, but these human conflicts as well. In an academic classroom setting, these human conflicts and value differences are not always apparent; neither is the political, social, cultural, and financial backdrop that accompanies many of these management issues. For example, management and conservation of fisheries and aquatic resources is organized, funded, and implemented based on an annual budget, which varies from year to year, state to state, organization to organization. With regulated funds, managers must pick and choose the most appropriate management options that are both affordable and realistic under the allocated budget. This type of selection can often create conflict, especially among managers and decision-makers, in an agency setting. By observing and participating in conferences, meetings, and discussions as part of the MSU Fenske Fellowship, I received a taste of real life decision-making that impacts fisheries resources and their habitats.

As an MSU Fenske Fellow, I gained a greater understanding and appreciation for the value of science as the foundation for most, if not all, fisheries and aquatic management decisions. I was, at first, surprised and then captivated by the amount of science that I saw being integrated into management and policy decisions that were soon implemented at the local, state, federal, provincial, or tribal scale. I realized that science exists at the foundation, informs fisheries management and policy decisions, and ultimately provides guidance to law enforcement officials and regulatory agents in the creation and carrying out of regulations and deterrence, incentives, and education strategies aimed to protect and enhance the resource. I explored these connections further during my MSU Fenske Fellowship experience as part of a half-day symposium at the 145th American Fisheries Society Annual Meeting in Portland, Oregon. This symposium brought together managers, communicators, enforcement officers, and researchers from local, state, federal, provincial, and tribal sectors to discuss the importance of science and the role of law enforcement in fisheries and aquatic resource management.

Two of the greatest lessons I learned from the MSU Fenske Fellowship experience came out of interactions with my two MSU Fenske Fellowship mentors: Bob Lambe, executive secretary of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission (GLFC), and Bill Taylor, my major advisor in my Ph.D. program. Through their example as leaders in the fisheries management community, they both taught me that strategic flexibility or the ability to adapt is key to positioning oneself as an institution, agency, or an individual to be able to address new, emerging fisheries and aquatic ecosystem management issues. They also



U.S. and Canadian Commissioners of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission (GLFC) discuss connectivity issues at the GLFC annual meeting in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Photo credit: Ted Lawrence.



Molly J. Good with her two mentors, Bill Taylor (L) of MSU and Bob Lambe (R) of GLFC. Photo credit: Ted Lawrence.

taught me that relationships or, better yet, partnerships—made up of people who work together toward a common goal that is important to them—matter in building and maintaining networks, thinking big, and improving organizational and agency effectiveness. The partnership between the MSU Fenske Fellows, and Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) and GLFC in Michigan alone is evidence of a growing network of state-trained future leaders in the conservation of fisheries and aquatic resources. I am grateful to MSU, Jan Fenske's family and friends, the MSU Fenske Fellowship partners, my mentors, and to GLFC for accepting me into their community and empowering me to establish my own network and gain fresh perspectives on fish, management, and the law. I will not let them down, nor Jan Fenske! **AFS**