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DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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K. L. COOL, Director

REPLY TO:

FISHERIES DIVISION
PO BOX 30446
LANSING MI 48909-7946

Refer to: 8304

February 7, 2000

Mr. Wilfred Swiecki
President
Platte Lake Improvement Association
28991 Glenbrook
Farmington Hills, Michigan 48331

Dear Mr. Swiecki:

Re: Platte River State Fish Hatchery Litigation

Since the 1970's, your organization and Fisheries Division have been involved in a dispute over the operation of the Platte River State Fish Hatchery and its impact on Big Platte Lake. We are finally reaching settlement of this long-standing dispute and it is time to reflect on this matter. I would like to make the following three points about this issue:

1. It is clear that the Platte River State Fish Hatchery was a significant contributor of phosphorus to Big Platte Lake in the 1970's and 1980's. Fisheries Division should have taken steps at that time to deal with the effluents but failed to do so in a timely fashion. We did take steps to reduce phosphorus discharges at the hatchery, only after being forced to, which is not appropriate for a natural resources agency. Our settlement will ensure that we will not be part of any future phosphorus problem but part of the long-term solution.
2. After reflecting on the history of the relationships between our entities, it is clear to me that Fisheries Division could have resolved this dispute a long time ago and should have treated all parties with dignity and respect. There is no excuse for not listening to our constituents for whom we are the public trustee of their common property. Unfortunately, personalities do get involved and we did not listen or treat some of our public in a professional manner. We apologize for our past inappropriate behavior and look forward to future relationships.
3. Rational people should not have resorted to speaking through attorneys to resolve a dispute. This has been an unfortunate episode for Fisheries Division and only by working with committed citizen groups, such as the Platte Lake Improvement Association, can we be successful in reaching our Division's goals and objectives. It is our hope that the settlement of this dispute will open the lines of communication between our organizations and that the Platte River watershed will benefit from our interactions.

We admit that we have made mistakes in the past and apologize for them. We do not intend to repeat these mistakes and I believe that our relationship with your organization has greatly improved as a result of our settlement discussions. It is critical that we work together to resolve natural resource problems in the Platte River watershed and we look forward to working with your organization.

If you have any additional questions on this matter, please contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary Whelan", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Gary E. Whelan
Fish Production Manager
FISHERIES DIVISION
(517) 373-6948