

One of the reasons Michigan attracts large numbers of tourists every summer is the quality of the water and the quantity of game fish in our lakes and streams. Now, however, these assets are under assault from microorganisms deadly to native fish and other creatures that depend on our fresh water for their existence.

The Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia Virus (VHS), not native to North America, is already responsible for massive fish kills. This virus is spreading rapidly through our inland waterways, clinging to the hulls of transport vessels as they make their way from foreign ports through the St. Lawrence Seaway into the Great Lakes. So far, four of the five Great Lakes are infested with this deadly VHS pathogen (Lake Superior is the exception). From our Great Lakes, this microscopic menace is hitching a ride on pleasure boats and fishing boats as they move from lake to lake in Oakland County, as well as lakes throughout Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, and New York. Once this deadly virus infects a lake, *it cannot be removed*.

To its credit, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources – Fisheries Division is actively managing a number of fish pathogens, including the VHS virus. But the resources of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources are diminishing, due to the economic difficulties plaguing state government.

With those resource limitations in mind, it is time we remind ourselves that the beautiful lakes in Oakland County are *our* lakes; as such, we the people have a duty to assist state officials in halting the spread of the killers of the fish we try to catch when we take our poles and nets, and launch our boats. If we don't do our part, there won't be any fish left to catch. In fact, the whole ecosystem of Michigan is in jeopardy.

One way area boat owners can help save our lakes is to disinfect their watercraft and fishing equipment before they take them from one lake to another. The DNR is seeking support to establish a voluntary system of boat disinfection stations at boat launches throughout the state. These stations will use Vikron Aquatic, a very effective disinfectant that eliminates VHS and other pathogens before they can be spread from lake to lake.

The Oakland County Board of Commissioners join me in supporting the voluntary system of boat disinfection stations. We also ask that cities, villages and townships in Oakland County consider ways in which these disinfection stations could be established in their communities if they have boat launches.

We are asking boat owners to use Vikron Aquatic rather than bleach, because it is safer to use. One packet of Vikron Aquatic is enough to disinfect a boat. Three packets of the substance cost less than \$9.00...a small price to pay to save important resources in our state that are not connected to the troubled auto industry.

Should our lakes become infected with VHS, and our fish die, sport fishing – and thus the tourism industry and jobs provided by it – will die with them. With our state hemorrhaging jobs, the last thing we need is the spread of Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia Virus to our lakes.

If you like walleye, bass, perch, and lake trout as much as I do, you know the urgency of this situation. I am imploring you, my fellow Oakland County citizens, to join me in this important undertaking. I thank in advance those who heed this clarion call.

Remember, the lake you save may be your own.