

Proposed Resolution

Submitted by: Michigan B.A.S.S. Nation

Passed:

Title: **MICHIGAN BASS SEASON CHANGE**

1 **WHEREAS**, Michigan is one of only four states with a statewide closed black bass (largemouth and
2 smallmouth bass) season; and,

3 **WHEREAS**, Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) surveys indicate an average of 83 to
4 92% of all legal-sized black bass caught by anglers are voluntarily released during Michigan’s catch-and-
5 keep bass season including 92% of all legal-sized black bass caught during the existing catch-and-keep
6 season on Lake St. Clair; and,

7 **WHEREAS**, it has been legal to catch-and-keep black bass during the entire Upper Peninsula bass spawn
8 and significant parts of Northern Michigan since 1970 with no reported, significant negative effect on
9 bass populations due to this fishing opportunity; and,

10 **WHEREAS**, it has been legal to catch-and-immediately-release black bass on the six 1988 test lakes
11 (Muskegon, Hardy, Pontiac, Holloway, Kent and Cass Lakes) for twenty-five (25) years during the bass
12 spawn that occurs before the catch-and-keep bass season opens without scientific evidence of negative
13 bass population effect due to this fishing opportunity; and,

14 **WHEREAS**, it has been legal to catch-and-immediately-release black bass statewide during the majority
15 of the bass spawn statewide since 2006 with no scientific evidence, or ongoing study demonstrating
16 negative bass population effect due to this fishing opportunity; and,

17 **WHEREAS**, research studies in Michigan and around North America have demonstrated no direct link
18 between black bass fishing any season and the success of new bass recruitment in future seasons, while
19 studies have demonstrated that most restrictive bass fishing regulations are ineffective or limited in effect
20 in creating better bass populations under high voluntary catch-and-release rates, and a majority of
21 Michigan citizens and state government have voted for and supported scientific management of our
22 natural resources; and,

23 **WHEREAS**, fishing is critical to our Michigan natural resources economy, angler recruitment and
24 retention key issues for Michigan, black bass are the second most popular fish in Michigan (behind only
25 panfish) with 589,000 anglers fishing for black bass a total of 8,739,000 fishing days in 2011 (*U.S. Fish
26 & Wildlife Service, 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation*), and
27 the MDNR has reported 16% of surveyed anglers say they will fish a catch-and-release bass season for a
28 potential of 95,000 to 300,000 or more additional fishing days; NOW,

29 **THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC) urges the
30 MDNR and Natural Resources Commission (NRC) to change Michigan's black bass season to
31 Largemouth and Smallmouth Bass catch-and-immediate-release statewide on all waters including Great
32 Lakes and Great Lakes Connecting Waters - January 1 through the Friday before Memorial Day,
33 Largemouth and Smallmouth Bass catch-and-keep statewide on all waters including Great Lakes and
34 Great Lakes Connecting Waters - Saturday before Memorial Day through the December 31 with the
35 following exceptions: a) Bass fishing is closed on inland trout and salmon waters during their closed
36 season dates since fishing is prohibited for all species on those waters, b) Michigan-Wisconsin Boundary
37 Waters - see the Michigan fishing guide (Michigan.gov/fishingguide) Michigan-Wisconsin Boundary
38 Water Regulations for waters covered, and the largemouth and smallmouth bass season for those waters,
39 c) Sylvania Wilderness Area - bass fishing is closed before the last Saturday in April or after October 31.
40 Statewide bass season applies from the last Saturday in April through October 31 though largemouth and
41 smallmouth bass must be released immediately on the special provision lakes - see Sylvania Wilderness
42 Area Regulations in the Michigan fishing guide (Michigan.gov/fishingguide), d) Fishing, bass season or
43 possession exceptions defined in Exceptions to General Regulations by County in the Michigan fishing
44 guide (Michigan.gov/fishingguide); and

45 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that MUCC work with the MDNR and NRC to adopt an adaptive
46 management approach to managing Michigan black bass populations. Experts have endorsed adaptive
47 management of natural resources, to learn by doing, in part due to the difficulty in making predictions
48 about long-term impacts of management actions, and the MDNR has stated they do not have the

49 time/resources to study Michigan black bass to the extent needed for new data to support or deny such a
50 change, yet studies already exist in many forms supporting more black bass fishing opportunity, forty-five
51 (45) states allow year-round black bass fishing, and adaptive management allows for adjusting seasons or
52 management on specific waters if scientific evidence demonstrate a need for special regulations.