

## Michigan Arctic Grayling Initiative

*Mindy Koch, October 2019*

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians are the founding partners of a statewide partnership focused on restoring a self-sustaining population of the Arctic Grayling within the Grayling's historic range, which includes several rivers in the northern Lower Peninsula and one river in the Upper Peninsula. The Arctic Grayling thrived in Michigan until the 1930's.

The Grayling played a prominent role as both a commercial food fish and as an attractive game fish. Three major factors contributed to the Graylings demise: habitat destruction, unregulated harvest, and competition from non-native fish species. The Grayling became extirpated from Michigan by 1936.

Arctic Grayling eggs were collected in May from the Chena River in Alaska and have been housed at Michigan State University since their arrival in Michigan. This is the first in a series of three year classes of fish that will make up the founding brood stock for the Arctic Grayling Initiative. The Initiative's goal is to maintain a genetically diverse brood stock to spawn.

Oden State Fish Hatchery is ready to accept juvenile Grayling. Grants and private donations were used to upgrade the fish hatchery to engineer, construct and install an ultraviolet water disinfection system to protect the fish from the possibility of introducing new pathogens. The UV system is necessary to the process of cultivating an Arctic Grayling brood stock in Michigan.

The Arctic Grayling was scheduled to arrive at Oden in August. The juvenile fish will be reared at Oden and transferred to Marquette State Fish Hatchery to continue maturing.

Developing a healthy stock of eggs that are suitable for Michigan's waters will take approximately three years. Then it will take three to four years before Grayling reach reproductive maturity. The development and use of Remote Site Incubators is critical to the success of the Initiative. The system allows fish to be reared and released directly into streams and imprint to the waters that they will reproduce in later. This approach mimics Montana's successful program for re-establishing Grayling .

The Michigan Arctic Grayling Initiative depends on support from approximately 50 partners, foundations, corporations, and private donations. The large number of partners and contributors highlights the enthusiasm generated by this initiative.

The end result will provide research opportunities and hopefully a sustainable Grayling population that can be managed to allow angling opportunities

You can find much more detail related to the details and goals of the initiative by going through the **migrayling.org** website. (MK)