

peterson-dave-2017-08-05.mp4

Dave Peterson [00:00:11] First of all, fly fishing in particular, and fishing for, it takes you to beautiful places. There aren't many fish that live in places that look bad, and are unpretty, and so it brings a sense of nature into your life. And then, for me, fishing has provided an opportunity to share a special interest with two of my children. Two out of three of them fish, and fly fish. And so that creates kind of a special bond with your kids. And then it also gives you a chance to have a special bond with a small group of friends, who you like to fish with.

Dave Peterson [00:00:52] It's funny, when you had that question on there; I grew up, my grandfather had a farm in north western Michigan, and so I grew up spending a part of my summers up there. And nobody in my family fished. Literally nobody. But my father and grandfather were kind enough to realize that I might be interested in it, and they always made, they always took me fishing, but they never fished. You know, that was bait fishing, and that type of thing. And then it just developed into a, my, the only hobby I really have is fishing, and hooked up with some friends that fished, and was able to be fishing for the last.... I'm 70 years old. Or 60, 67 so. Been at it since I was about that big, so.

James Thull [00:01:40] Wow. Started out fishing for bluegill, walleye, perch, that kind of thing?

Dave Peterson [00:01:45] Bluegill, bluegill and perch.

James Thull [00:01:46] Bluegill and perch.

Dave Peterson [00:01:47] Bluegill and perch, off the seawall, in Pentwater, Michigan, that goes out to the big lake.

James Thull [00:01:53] Yeah.

Dave Peterson [00:01:53] I would sit there and dangle a zebco.

Dave Peterson [00:02:03] I am fortunate, because I get to fish in areas that have not been particularly adversely affected by the crap we do to our, our waters. So I have found, trout fishing, primarily in Michigan, trout fishing, I think, has remained fairly consistent. I've been fishing for trout, not a lot of that time. And then I've done a lot of my small mouth bass fishing and stuff has been in the clinical wilderness, and the boundary waters wilderness, where the fishing has remained constant. I'm not a big lake fisherman, that has changed a lot, in the big lake. The guys that fish the Big Lake, charter guys, into that type of thing, and the salmon fishing, the salmon population in Lake Michigan is crashing, because there's no forage fish left. And that's a problem we manufactured ourselves, by stocking too many of those fish. What's unknown at this point, is whether with the salmon leaving, whether actually trout fishing can get better, because the trout in our naturally reproducing trout, in our rivers, are not going to have to compete with salmon for spawning grounds, anymore, so. Yours is a complicated question. That, uh, so what else, and pan fishing, where I take my grandkids fishing, has declined. Because landowners all want to kill the weeds. They don't want weeds in front of their house, so there's no shelter for those fish. So.

Dave Peterson [00:03:40] Well it's. You're asking. I have a strong personal interest, as I'm conservation chair for the FFI. But yeah, I think the weather extremes are amazing. We

have long periods of warmer weather in western Michigan, and more intense storms, I think. I've attended a couple of, I work, I work a lot with the DNR in Michigan, and the DNR biologists in Michigan have created future maps, showing what's going to happen to the fishery, and warm water fish are just going to move right up the state. They're predicting, and I'm going to have the number wrong, but I think in 100, 150 years, that what are called currently cold water fisheries, in the middle of Michigan, will turn into, uh, warmwater fisheries.

James Thull [00:04:33] Yeah.

Dave Peterson [00:04:33] So I think that stuff is going to be pretty profound.

Dave Peterson [00:04:43] Primarily, global warming. I think that's a terrific one. I just left a meeting with the Yellowstone.. Mine, they're, they're an anti-mining coalition. There's still active mining threats, right here in the Yellowstone Valley. Habitat degradation continues to be a big issue, although, I could say in Michigan, we're making progress on that. And, you know, and improving habitat for migratory fishes. But, you know, farmers are still using a lot of chemicals on their land, that's non-point source pollution, that comes in via rain. There's no end to the threats to our fisheries, I think. And we just have to keep fighting off, fighting them off.

Dave Peterson [00:05:38] Absolutely. I mean, if you look historically, there's not just our, in our culture, but other cultures, just. You know. Screw up the land until they have to move. Well, I'm afraid that's going to happen to us. Or my grandkids grandkids. You know.

Dave Peterson [00:06:02] Yeah. My home river is the upper Marquette. And what makes it special is, it's, it's just breathtakingly beautiful. And because of it's water sources, interestingly, it's a little bit immune. Knock on wood, to some of the pressures we've been talking about. Imagine a giant Spring Creek in Michigan, it's all spring fed, doesn't have any other water sources than it's headwaters, and it's headwaters are in a relatively remote area, so it stays cold, all the time. And we fish for brown trout, rainbow trout, steelhead, and salmon, in the river. So it's, it's, it's a treasure. And it's undammed, it's entire length. It's a rarity in Michigan.

Dave Peterson [00:06:49] I think they play a big role, because at least, knock on wood, that if they stay the same way, they can't be developed. They can't be ruined, because they're National and State Parks, and so they provide everybody access, some access to land. And public waters, and that type of thing. And so I think there is pretty crucial. But we're, we're always fighting for, you know, access to public land, wherever we can. So people can see these places, and not see them ruined. I mean, imagine if Six Flags were in Yellowstone National Park.

James Thull [00:07:33] Yeah.

Dave Peterson [00:07:33] It would be like Disneyland, a fake world.

Dave Peterson [00:07:43] I'd go to Michigan, to fish for trout.

James Thull [00:07:47] Now brookies are the only native trout to Michigan, right?

Dave Peterson [00:07:49] Brook, brookies and grayling.

James Thull [00:07:54] That's right, grayling are native.

Dave Peterson [00:07:55] Were, were native. And were wiped out by the loggers, uh, very, one of the loggers right from the town I live in. Charles Mears. All that wood was used to build Chicago. And so they, they literally, I have a picture of the county I live in, which is now heavily forested, with nothing but slash covering the whole county. And so that's what drove the grayling out. And then in the late '70s, brown trout were put into the Marquette, and that was the first place in the United States, that they were introduced.

James Thull [00:08:24] Really?

Dave Peterson [00:08:25] Yeah. So that brought in the browns. They took care of, the water warmed up, in a lot of the streams, for brookies. But all of our headwater streams have small brook trout in them.

James Thull [00:08:37] Yeah, and I know, in the UP there's some good brookies.

Dave Peterson [00:08:40] Yeah, there's some good brookies in the UP, but we have brookies down by us too. But you've got to go back into the pucker brush to find them.

Dave Peterson [00:08:51] Oh, yeah. I fish in Maine a lot, as well. And catching landlocked salmon in those river, you know, those are native fish that have been there for millions of years, and it's much more fun to them, and it's all much more fun to catch a fish that doesn't have its fin clipped too on top of it. You know, we were talking about this yesterday. Brown trout were an invasive originally in Michigan, but now they're, they're, they're not anymore. Those were wildly reproducing fish, but no, they were dumped out of barrels off of a railroad cart, and introduced in Michigan.

Dave Peterson [00:09:32] Yeah. TU. And then we have regional watershed councils that exist, to protect the different watersheds. And, and then not for profits, that manage restoration projects. So, I mean, there. It's really hard for somebody to make a mistake and screw up a stream in Michigan now, without having somebody all over them. Give you a concrete example, the anglers of the Asabel, the TU was founded on the banks of the Asabel, are fighting a fish farm. That's, somebody is trying to put in, that would use inflow from the, from the Asabel, and then all the fish poop would run out and go into the Asabel. They've raised four hundred thousand dollars, to fight that fish farm. So environmental activism is just built into the fabric of sportsmen in Michigan.

Dave Peterson [00:10:28] It's critical. It's critical. And I mean, you know, we're, we're trying, and trying now, to reach out more to, to women, to minorities, to try to, you know, the the problem is, is that, you know, women have traditionally felt shut out of this sport, because they view it, you know there is a, I suppose it's like the glass ceiling that they face in employment. But there's been a lot, we have a group that's based in Michigan, that's an FFI affiliate, called Fly Girls. That specifically reaches out to women anglers. And as, as to getting to minority kids, we're going to have to figure out a way to get to the places that they live. We have a large population of Mexican Americans in our area, that come to grow the property. We try, we hold casting clinics and invite them to come, and hold casting schools, and try to get them involved. But, frankly, they don't have enough money to get this sport. That's, you know, as you know it's expensive.

Dave Peterson [00:11:37] That young angler, I would connect to our fly fishing club. The kind of a strange name, the West Michigan Hacklers, and we would make sure that kid got

a rod, a reel, and learned how to fish. We, it's one of our missions is to give kids an opportunity to fish. So.

Dave Peterson [00:12:05] I read that question, and I was trying to think about this guy that I've fished with for over 30 years. Being low maintenance, being somebody you can trust to be where they say they're going to be, and my, my buddy and I, Michael, have developed a rhythm, where we go off and go fishing, and when we're, when we're done, we're all, we're always in the same place. There's some kind of a rhythm we've developed, that, even if we're not together on the stream, we end up in the same place, you know. And I'm doing a very bad job of describing it, but it's, it's just a bond we have, and we don't really talk that much, and we just can depend on each other, to be where we say we're going to be, and there's not a competition. Well, it's a competition for him, but not for me. It's really hard to describe, it's just the bond that we have, and we've been fishing together for twenty five years, and we'll fish together until one of us croaks.

Dave Peterson [00:13:22] It's just... Our rivers are just beautiful. I mean that, it's, uh, it always comes back to the, to the beauty of the river, as far as I'm concerned. Our water quality is excellent. I like fishing here, but it's a lot nicer to fish in, not nicer. It's great to fish here, don't get me wrong. And you guys have bigger fish, and you have more fish. But when you can fish in a stream that's lined with white pines, and just, you know, we have a lot of woody material. It's just the beauty of our rivers is just, they're unbelievable. People come from other places and go, wow, this is really cool. And we also have a very fine steelhead fishery, which is special.

Dave Peterson [00:14:13] What they're getting right is, they've done a good job, the the MDNR, of being transparent about what they do, and getting a lot of public input. And I, I, I get to interact in my job, with the director of fisheries, whenever I want, because I'm the conservation chair there, as well. So they pay attention to us. And they're very transparent about any change in regulations, and they make sure there's a lot of opportunities for input. Our structure there is, is different. The DNR doesn't independently make decisions, they report to what's called the Natural Resources Commission, and so if there's a fishing regulation change, it comes from the Natural Resources Commission, on a policy basis. From my perspective, what they're not getting right is, and this is, you know, the push and pull that they face between those of us who think we ought to release every fish, and the hook and bullet crowd, is that they, they're not aggressive enough about gear restrictions on some rivers, about making rivers catch and release and, and from our perspective, it's, as fly fishers and conservationists, that they need to be more aggressive on that. And, you know, stricter limits, and more catch and release water. But they've got constituencies that don't want that, too. And, you know, the tradition of Michiganders, I took 20 brook trout, my grandson ought to be able to take twenty brook trout. I mean they're, they're revisiting 15 brook trout limit in the UP, and we've got it lowered to 10. And there's this pressure to move back to 15. And you know how you clean out a river, taking those on worms. You can ruin a small stream in a summer.

Dave Peterson [00:16:05] Yeah. It's, it's we're, we're not a heavily populated area, so it's a relatively small club. I think we probably got 40 members. We're a club of the FFI. You know, part of that club council structure. We tie flies, and we teach people to tie flies. We hold little classes at the libraries around Oceana County, all of Oceana County is 30,000 people. That's where we're based. So, my town is, you know, 850 so. But we teach people to tie flies. We participate in conservation projects in our local rivers, and stay in contact with all the watershed councils. We teach people to fly cast, and we hold fishing outings, and invite people to come to them and try to introduce them to the sport of fly fishing. We

talked about kids earlier. We have a kid that wants to learn more about fly fishing, and his parents aren't that available, so we, we'll pick him up, bring him to a club meeting, and take him home. So. And we meet every two weeks, during the winter.

Dave Peterson [00:17:17] I, just that, if you're going to bother with this business, and learn to fish, and, and fishing. You got to give something back, to the, to the resource. It just may be picking up wrappers by the side of the road, or it may be doing a little bit more.