



Lake Erie / Lake St. Clair Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee

Established by the Department of Natural Resources to improve and maintain the fishery resources of Lake Erie, Lake St. Clair, and the St. Clair and Detroit Rivers through better communication and partnership.

Agenda Belle Isle Nature Zoo 176 Lakeside Drive, Detroit, MI 48207 September 13, 2017

10:00-10:05 Welcome and introductions (Frank Corl, acting Chair and Jim Francis, DNR)

10:05-10:15 Review the agenda and meeting minutes from April 2017 (All)

A summary of the status of action items from the last meeting will be discussed

- Ice angler access at Selfridge Boating Access Site (BAS): In a January 2017 reply letter to our committee, Parks indicated they would provide safe access for ice anglers off the front wall at the Selfridge access site. No improvements were made to the site this past season due to the lack of ice. Jim has since had follow up discussions with Parks Division, but it was unclear what would be done for the coming ice fishing season. He will follow up again with Parks Division to see if there is a resolution planned prior to this coming ice fishing season.
- Proposed BAS at Belle Isle: Parks Division has funded a feasibility study to evaluate potential locations in the upper Detroit River; timeline for completion is still unclear so we will revisit at our next meeting.

10:15-10:45 Fisheries Research Update (Todd Wills, MDNR-Fisheries)

- Creel survey 2016: LSC - 15% and Erie – 14% of MI Great Lakes angler effort. Erie accounted for 55% of total catch and LSC 16% total catch.
- Sturgeon-33% recapture rate for setline survey in North Channel (2/3 new fish coming into system – large populations estimate, but also large confidence intervals around estimate). Good age and size distribution. Rarely get recaps in LSC trawls.
- Catching state-endangered northern madtoms in minnow traps on set lines. Good sign of water quality, encouraging to see them.
- In Lake Erie August trawls, caught almost 11,500 fish and 22 different species. White perch most abundant by far (as usual in the time series), followed by gizzard shad and yellow perch. Young-of-year walleye catch rates were highest in survey (2014-2017).
- 2017 Lake Erie gill net survey will be week of Oct 9.
- Andrew Briggs has started as the new fishery research biologist. Andrew comes to us from the USFWS where he worked on the St Clair – Detroit River System working on lake sturgeon, invasive species and other fish community work.

LSC Bass population status

- For Anchor Bay smallmouth bass trap net data, there was a trend of increased catch rate from 2001-2017 (though not significant). There was a general trend of more large individuals (14+ and 16+ inch) in the most recent years of the survey.

- Mortality rates have generally decreased since 2012 (not significantly) and are within a sustainable range.
- SMB recruitment is highly variable, with lots of ups and downs. No years of terrible recruitment. Strong-stock recruit relations not identified here or elsewhere.
- There has been a significant increase in SMB charter effort since 2010, with a slight downward trend in catch rates. The non-significant decline began occurring in 2013 and 2014, prior to any black bass regulation changes in LSC. The charter catch and effort data are approaching an asymptote, indicating not a straight forward relationship between charter catch and effort.
- Henry's observations were that the catch of 14-18 inch bass was down, but there was an increase in the catch of 20 inch bass. Others observed that there was a decrease in the bycatch of small bass by yellow perch anglers on LSC, but Bob indicated good catches of small bass during spring and fall in the Detroit River. It is unclear if there is a decrease in number of small bass or if they are just in different areas, whether due to changes in forage, vegetation, water levels, etc.

10:45-11:15 Red Swamp Crayfish (Sara Thomas, MDNR-Fisheries)

- Native to Gulf Coast states. Very invasive, including issues overseas. Build extensive burrows which can lead to infrastructure and property damage. Very aggressive and can outcompete natives.
- Two detections in mid-July in SE and SW Michigan. Press release generated a lot of public reports, many of which were of natives. DNR has followed up on all credible reports.
- SE Michigan – initial report was in a ¾ acre retention pond in Novi. The Lake Erie Management Unit has trapped this pond using baited minnow traps since mid-July and captured over 3500 individuals. Traps were set in 11 additional areas near the Novi site and collected red swamp in 6 of them (2 of these are connected to initial pond).
- There is now an MSU crew onboard that will take over trapping additional locations to determine the distributional extent of the infestation. Collaboration is underway to determine if a chemical control is a viable option in these artificial retention pond type habitats that they seem to so far prefer.
- If see try to collect specimen and freeze or take picture and report to herbsts1@michigan.gov

11:15-11:45 Law Enforcement Division Update (Lt. Molnar, MDNR-Fisheries)

- 15 years with the Department, primarily in Alpena.
- Highly intense fishery – very busy.
- Long walleye season. Writing lots of tickets for short fish (walleye & bass). 2 recent tickets for short muskie (1 was revived and released).
- RAP hotline manned 24 hours (coverage not necessarily 24 hours). Customer service-callers should be getting call backs (probably not right away though). Chris Kiel busted sturgeon poacher after on duty 21 hrs and driving up from Detroit
- Wayne Co., Oakland and Macomb – 3 officers each. Belle Isle is joint effort with District 9 and southern MI and they rotate.

11:45-12:30 Lunch—provided by DNR

12:30-1:00

Maumee River sturgeon project (Jim Boase, USFWS)

- Lake Erie historically had multiple river spawning stocks of lake sturgeon, currently none. U of Toledo research (J. Sherman) indicated that there is suitable habitat in Maumee River to support sturgeon spawning and rearing of young.
- Large collaborative effort came together to design a rehabilitation strategy to try and restore a sturgeon population in Maumee River. Would take an eternity at current dispersal rates. Will get spawning fish from Lake Huron and St Clair River and raise fish in two locations. First will be Genoa National Fish hatchery and second will be streamside facility on grounds of Toledo Zoo. Pilot egg collection this year and went well. First release of fish scheduled for 2018. Plan to raise fish for at least 25 years. Good opportunity for outreach with presence at Toledo Zoo.

1:00-1:20

Brown trout stocking in the St Clair River (Cleyo Harris, MDNR-Fisheries)

- Mix of boat and shore fishing on St. Clair River (SCR). Most harvested species include walleye, white bass, yellow perch and drum. In creel surveys, number of trout and salmon harvested in relatively low and brown trout make up only 8-12% of the salmonid total harvest.
- Brown trout stocking in the SCR began in 1981 to provide additional trout fishing opportunity in SE MI. Numbers stocked have fluctuated, but since 2009 stocked at least 100,000 annually at 2 locations. This is an average annual cost of \$135,000.
- Anglers are reporting very few browns, more Atlantic salmon reported this year. Creel survey shows low return of stocked brown trout to anglers.
- DNR exploring options moving forward, including discontinuing the stocking. Group was unanimous in favor of allocating resources elsewhere and no longer stocking browns in SCR. It was noted that it is not an option to replace them with Atlantics, given hatchery logistics and that they are at capacity with Atlantics.

1:20-1:30

Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development meeting on Lake Erie Algal Blooms (Matt Shackelford)

- Matt reported that it was more of a group of organizations/businesses sharing what they were doing rather than MDARD actually presenting a plan or showcasing what is being done. Plans to have future meetings.

1:30-2:00

Fisheries Division Update (Jim Francis, MDNR-Fisheries)

- Regulations update:
 - Expanded yellow perch spearing in Lake St Clair – for information at October NRC meeting.
 - Sturgeon regulation changes for St Clair River, Lake St Clair, and Detroit River – for information at September NRC meeting.
 - Muskellunge regulation changes, including C&R season on Lake St Clair – for information at September NRC meeting.
- The previous fishing guide was good for the 2016-2017 license year, but in 2018 going back to 1-year guide.
- We are hearing from anglers who are catching Atlantic salmon – please get heads to DNR so we can evaluate stocking.
- The Army Corps of Engineers report on the Brandon Road Lock was released on August 7 and public comments on the report will be accepted through November 16.

- The preferred alternative incorporates a number of measures, including an engineered channel, complex noise, an electric barrier, flushing lock, and water jets. The implementation dates is 2025, with a construction cost of \$275M and annual maintenance cost of \$10.5M.
- Michigan is conducting an Invasive Carp Challenge seeking creative solutions to preventing silver and bighead carp from entering the Great Lakes.
- Michigan participated in a grass carp exercise conducted by OH DNR in the Sandusky River in August. During the 2-day event – 8 grass carp were caught. This project will help in planning a larger effort in 2018.

2:00-2:45

Committee Member Round Table (All)

- Jim Felgenauer – North Channel Sturgeon Classic, Sept 23-24
- Bob Burns - Update on Celeron and Stony Island restoration projects
- Ralph Kandt –
 - VHS and federal regulations putting lots of strain on bait dealers. Can't bring emerald shiners in from Canada.
 - High water (lake levels) making it challenging to harvest emerald shiners in MI waters
 - Emphasizes danger if not better ice access at Selfridge.
 - Thinks Gino's property may be available again and recommended looking at providing access at Cotton Rd.

2:45-3:00

Open discussion, summary of meeting, future meeting topics and locations (Frank Corl)

- Vote for next meeting to occur prior to April 1.

Lake Erie / Lake St. Clair Citizens
Fishery Advisory Committee

Belle Isle Nature Zoo
September 13, 2017

Attendees:

Name	Affiliation
John Bacarella	Sportsmen's Direct Inc
Mary Bohling	Michigan Sea Grant
Dan Boileau	Downriver Walleye Federation
Bob Burns	Friends of the Detroit River/Detroit Riverkeeper
Jerry Comfort	Lake St Clair Walleye Association
Frank Corl	Downriver Bass Association
Mike Eichbrecht	Charter Captain/Michigan Sportsman.com
Jim Felgenauer	St. Clair-Detroit River Sturgeon for Tomorrow
Jim Francis	MDNR-Fisheries
Ralph Kandt	Wholesale Bait Dealers
Rick Kretzschmar	National Professional Anglers Association
Tim Muir	Lake St. Clair Walleye Association
Dave Reault	The Bass Federation of Michigan
Matt Shackelford	DTE Energy
Bruce Yinger	Downriver Bass Association
Staff:	
Cleyo Harris	MDNR-Fisheries
Lt. Joe Molnar	MDNR-Law Enforcement
Sara Thomas	MDNR-Fisheries
Todd Wills	MDNR-Fisheries
Guests:	
Jim Boase	USFWS
Dan Kimmel	Michigan BASS Nation
Henry Walters	Michigan Charter Boat Association
