

**Lake Michigan Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee**  
**Meeting Notes**  
**May 13, 2014**  
**MUCC headquarters**  
**Lansing, MI**

**Chair Report**

Chair Grinold called the meeting to order at 10:00 and acknowledged Jim Schramm for his recent recognition by American Rivers as a “River Champion”.

The minutes from the fall 2013 minutes were reviewed and approved with no changes.

The Great Lakes Fish Advisory Committee recently approved two resolutions; one requesting the immediate replacement of oil pipeline number 5 that is currently under the Straits of Mackinaw. This pipeline is more than 60 years old and is unsupported in many locations. Approximately 22 million gallons of crude oil are transported through this pipeline per day, and a leak would have devastating impacts on the Great Lakes ecosystem. The other resolution recommended a prohibition on the sale of any cosmetic or personal care product containing plastic microbeads. Microbeads are currently found in many cosmetic products and eventually end up in natural water systems since they are not easily removed through typical wastewater treatment processes. A recent Great Lakes open water survey found the highest concentrations of microplastics on earth, and the majority were microbeads (less than one millimeter in size). Microbeads can be mistaken for food by organisms throughout the aquatic food chain, where it can cause physical blockages, internal damage, and serve as a pathway for dangerous toxic pollutants to enter the food chain and contaminate the fish and wildlife we eat.

Denny handed out the revised LMCFAC member list and asked every member to reaffirm their primary and alternate representatives. These designations were documented in the committee roster. Denny also welcomed new representatives to the Committee from Big Jon Sports.

Denny reported that the Lake Michigan salmon stocking Frequently Asked Questions document has been completed and is on the DNR website. The LMCFAC members submitted questions to populate the FAQ at the fall 2013 LMCFAC meeting.

**Member Fishing Reports**

The following were comments on the Lake Michigan fishery from the Committee members:

The lake trout and cisco fishing in Grand Traverse Bay has been phenomenal.

Yellow perch fishing in Garden Bay has been good.

The St. Joe tournament had good results.

Atlantic salmon are being caught in the Straits area.

There was about 46" of ice in the Muskegon harbor, so not much activity there.

Pier fishing for brown trout has been great this spring, especially out of Saugatuk and Holland. Limit catches of yellow perch have also been reported out of Holland.

The spring brown trout fishery was very good out of Ludington.

Steelhead patterns and run timing are different this year due to the cold winter and high water conditions.

Steelhead fishing was really good, but the best fishing was compressed versus previous years.

The Bays de Noc still have ice.

This was the best year for spring brown trout fishing in recent memory from Frankfort south.

### **Fish consumption advisory update**

A presentation was given by Kory Groetch from the MI Department of Community Health. He reported that the revised fish consumption guidelines will be published in two to three weeks. There is a need to pursue consistent fish consumption guidelines among states and he participates on the Great Lakes Fish Consumption Advisory Consortium which is discussing this issue.

The new MI fish consumption guidelines put MI in better line with other neighboring states, and the Dept. of Community Health is working with other states to pursue collaborative sampling designs.

The MDOCH will send Fisheries Division the new guides prior to the official release and Fisheries Division will forward these to the LMCFAC.

### **Fisheries Division updates**

The Aquatic Habitat Grant program will distribute one million dollars to partners and stakeholders to preserve and enhance fisheries habitat this year. Next year we are anticipating distributing \$1.25 million.

### **Lake Michigan lake trout regulations**

Wesley provided an update of Fisheries Divisions efforts to solicit comments on potentially lowering the lake trout minimum size limit in MM 6-8 from 20" to 15".

Comments were solicited at public meetings and there didn't seem to be any concerns. He polled the LMCFAC to see if there was any concern with the proposed regulation change, and none of the Committee members had an issue with the proposal. This would bring the minimum size limit in line with Lake Huron and Lake Superior.

Fisheries Division staff convened four public meetings (Frankfort, Leland, Traverse City, and Charlevoix) to discuss potential lake trout regulation changes in MM1-5. Based on the initial public comment the following regulations are being considered as a starting point for staff discussions: MM1-3 (20-25", 1 over 30", 3 fish bag); MM 4 (15-28", 1 over 34", 2 fish bag); MM 5 (15-30", 1 over 34", 2 fish bag). These are only starting points for staff discussions, and they will develop regulation recommendations by the first of July and send them out for a final round of public comment.

### **Salmon regulations and assessments**

Randy Claramunt summarized Fisheries Division Research Section that has four Great Lakes stations, two inland stations and four Great Lakes vessels.

He also provided a brief summary of the salmon mass marking program and coded wire tag results to date. At most of the index locations throughout the state, the majority of salmon returning to those sites were not stocked there. This highlights the importance of lake-wide management of salmon.

Randy also provided an update on the progress of the Lake Michigan Committee Salmonid Working Group's efforts to enhance the salmon red flags protocol. The working group is in the process of finalizing a predator prey ratio. The predator prey ratio is basically a model that incorporates diverse biological information that can be used to predict population level changes. The old red flags assessment did not have the capability to predict changes; it was basically a diagnostic tool. The Lake Michigan Committee will review the predator prey ratio at the Lake Michigan Technical meeting this summer to determine whether or not it will replace Strawberry Creek weir returns as the primary indicator informing managers whether or not salmon stocking levels should be adjusted.

Randy also summarized the history of the 5/3 salmon daily bag limit (DBL) in MI jurisdictional waters of the Great Lakes. The catch per unit effort went down from the original estimate last fall (from 0.2-0.044). The original estimate was generated with only 10% of the total available charter data (through September). Based on the new estimate both indicators (percent of charter anglers catching three or more salmon and catch rate) were below the threshold that determines whether or not a three or five fish bag limit is established for the next year. Since we are already into the 2014 fishing season and the alewife population only has only two year classes (2010 and 2012) significantly contributing to the forage base of salmon, Fisheries Division decided not to decrease the DBL to three. Instead, Fisheries Division committed to conduct an evaluation of the existing process to determine the salmon DBL. Claramunt also discussed a potential option to link the determination of the DBL to the newly enhanced

Red Flags assessment (predator/prey ratio). Numerous comments (and pros and cons of each) were received by the Committee regarding this issue including:

Keep the system as it is.

- Pros: Established system, relatively easy to understand.
- Cons: Timing of information input. By the time all of the Charter data is received, Fisheries Division has finished the current year fishing guide.
- Several committee members liked the current system stating that it has served us well and is easy to understand, but acknowledged that something needs to be done regarding the timing of data input and assessment.

Report results in late March instead of September

- Pros: Would have a more complete data set to determine the DBL.
- Cons: Regulations wouldn't be printed in the guide since the guide needs to be finalized in January/February.
- The Committee was very open to this idea noting that very good publicity would need to occur to get the word out regarding the DBL every year.

Offset the recommendations by one year.

- Pros: Would have a complete data set to determine the DBL.
- Cons: Is not very reactive to sudden changes in the population.
- The Committee wasn't real supportive of this idea since predator and prey population numbers can vary significantly from one year to another and we need to be responsive to these potential changes.

Use creel data instead of charter data since reports can be generated more timely.

- Pros: Creel data is more "real time" than charter data because it is submitted daily by the creel clerks and can be turned around in one month.
- Cons: Creel data is estimated data versus actual charter catch data.
- The Committee was open to this idea, but would still like to incorporate Charter data in some fashion.

Require more timely Charter reporting or develop an app.

- Pros: This would require timely reporting and assessment
- Cons: Not all Charter anglers use electronics needed for this type of system.
- The Committee liked this idea, but was concerned that some Charter anglers would have difficulties with it.

Develop a new model connected to the predator/prey ratio

- Pros: The bag limit would be based in the same information used to inform salmon stocking in Lake Michigan
- Cons: It may be more complicated to understand and it's not well understood how it would work at this time.
- The Committee determined that they needed more information on this option before they could develop an option.

#### Additional comments

- Concern was raised that only data from Lake Michigan is used to determine regulations for Lake Superior, Huron, and Erie.

**ACTION ITEM: The other Advisory Committees will develop a list of options with pros, cons, and comments and all the comments will be collated and discussed by the Basin Coordinators to develop a strategy to move forward to present to the NRC. Fisheries Division will also continue work on how the bag limit could potentially be connected to the new predator prey ration and present it at the fall LMCFAC meeting.**

#### Law Division updates

Steve Huff –DNR-Law Division

- Here representing MDNR Commercial Fish Enforcement which he has been doing personally for 14 years. Enforcement team staff consists of one Supervisor, three Boat Captains, one Investigator, and there are four vacancies.
- MDNR has placed a focus on Belle Isle (1000 acres -5 miles of shoreline) with 24 out of 36 initial recruits getting duty tours on the island working with MSP officers. Used vessels as platform for sonar survey of surrounding waters.
- Have also been involved in several maritime events providing security. In 2013 worked on enforcement issues with the 1836 Treaty Waters. Handled 84 complaints, made 21 arrests, and made 41 referrals to tribal interests. They are not responsible for 1842 waters treaty enforcement.
- State fishery had 133 lake patrols, 300 dockside inspections, 264 nets for proper marking, boarded 36 vessels, and conducted 283 wholesale fish dealer inspections.
- Conducted investigation and inspection surrounding the sinking of the tribal trap net vessel Sandy sinking in the Ludington harbor. Worked with the USCG on this situation.
- Provided a vessel as platform for MSP Dive team to remove nets fouled in dive site active under the Coastal Zone Management program.
- Big Bay de Noc required work on the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the 2012 investigation on Subsistence fishermen not being allowed to commercially sell their catch. Identified over 200 pounds of dressed walleye and perch present in commercial markets. Fisher charged with 21 violations and received \$1175.00 in fines and costs.

- Garden area had 10,000 feet of abandoned gill net recovered that had been in the water approximately two years and seemed to contain lake trout and burbot in varying degrees of decay. The tribal fisher's staff buoy was recovered on the end of the net string, which resulted in a \$300.00 fine. State still seeking additional restitution for recovery costs.
- Aquatic Invasive Species training active with federally supported task force groups participating in meetings in Arkansas to identify problems on the supply end of the chain. Undertook a sweep of retail fish markets in the Detroit area looking for prohibited species.
- Reviewed the state wide bait industry—some in state and others from surrounding states. Discovering live mail order bait being shipped in and investigating health certification. All retail dealers in the Upper Peninsula were inspected. Thirty-two wholesalers interviewed, 61 catchers, and 173 retailers. Three citations and 27 verbal warnings were issued.
- Abandoned nets were continued to be investigated in the White Lake and Ludington areas. The five ghost nets off White Lake will continue to be located and identified by surveys by several initiatives. The LRBOI has contracted with a fisher from Charlevoix to attempt recovery of any gear identified.
- Un-occupied boat found circling near the Muskegon/Oceana county line is not suspected to be a net entanglement issue.
- MDNR is providing continuing training to USCG personnel on net enforcement and issues.